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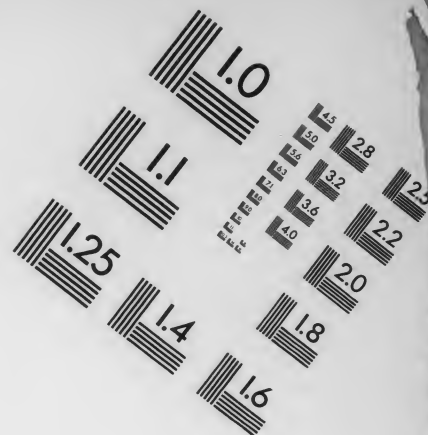
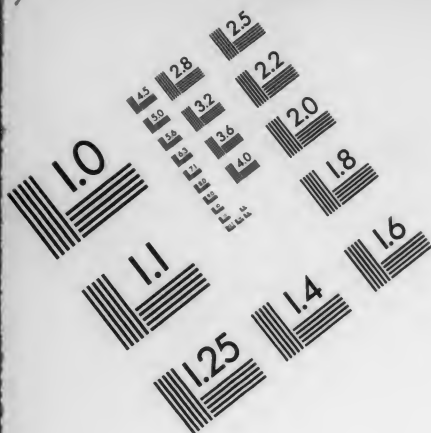
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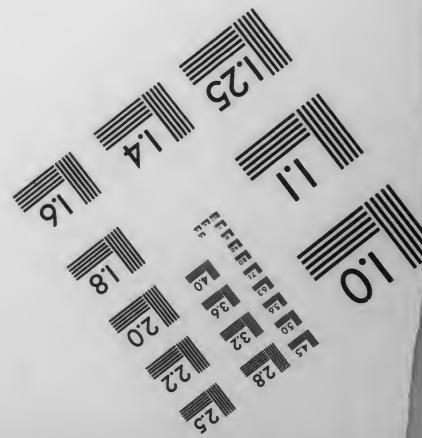
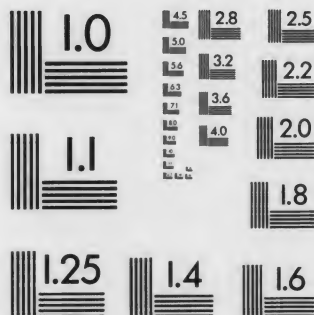
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GIVEN BY

Pres. Seth Low.



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YOUTH

YOUTH

BY

CHARLES WAGNER

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

ERNEST REDWOOD

NEW YORK

DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

1893

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University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

TO GRACE KING

*The American edition of this book
is dedicated.*

182385

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Pres. Seth Low

TO THE YOUTH OF AMERICA.

My pen trembles in my hand with emotion as I write these lines. They are going afar, to unknown friends; and I would have them speak to their hearts. Across the distance which separates us, I would have them tell the profound sympathy I feel for them, and for that glorious country whose children they are.

I have put in this book the difficulties, the doubts, the vices, the contradictions, of the youth of France. I have put in also the noble griefs, the sufferings, the ardent thirst of an elect few who from out the beaten paths of realism and amid the disintegration of an artificial life aspire to a wholesome existence, to an inner harmony, to moral grandeur, to the pure sources of the divine.

I have tried to encourage the awaking of the modern spirit, and from amidst the darkness where we stumble, to point with my finger to the morning star.

In stigmatizing these vices, in pointing out these hopes, in indicating the path which leads upward to the heights, have I done but a local work? Has the youth of our old France nothing in common with that of young America? I cannot think it. We form

one solidarity, united as much by the fatality of evil as by the traces of the higher life within us. Young nations, despite their vitality, their noble strength, their overflowing vigour, may none the less be touched by certain decrepitudes; while above the moss-grown trunks of old-world nations there may grow green a branch of eternal hope.

I have, then, every reason to believe that on both sides of the ocean we have the same enemies and the same allies. We all need to be reminded that man does not live by bread alone,—that the prosperity, the knowledge, the development of the material energies which are the glory of this century, can end only in making of our civilization a colossus with feet of clay, if we lose faith and fraternity. We all need to be reminded that intellectual overproduction, that overtaxing the receptive faculties and the sensibilities, both moral and physical, end in destroying man's equilibrium, in enervating his will, and plunging individuals and nations into decadence, despite all their culture. All of us, finally, have need to regain respect for love.

Your customs are doubtless unlike ours. Your system of education gives you wonderful advantages. The young man is not from infancy kept apart from the young girl, creating thus for a lifetime two fractions of humankind, who understand one another so poorly, and thwart one another so often. Among you one cannot speak lightly of the worst sins,—against chastity, man's dignity, and woman's honour. And yet, for your youth as for ours, can

it not be said that love is at one and the same time its brightest and its darkest feature? I have no fear of contradiction.

Let those who may commune with me in this book look into their own consciences. They will then understand why it is that from its first page I keep reiterating that with all youth the principal question is love. In it, young men, is your ruin or your salvation.

Respect love in your own person and in that of woman. Respect the sources of life. All the lives to come are confided to the honour of the youth of the present generation. Meditate on the grandeur of such a responsibility, and draw your own inferences. They to whom the sacred fire is intrusted should keep repeating, *Noblesse oblige*.

When I consider the youth of our day, it seems to me in every land like a vast sown field. Here, under the most varied forms, are growing the noxious plants that will poison the future; here, too, are growing the good wheat and the healthful herbs destined to nourish us, to comfort us, and to heal our wounds.

In face of this alternative, I cannot refrain from addressing this personal question to every one whose eyes shall fall upon this book:—

Will you be of those who do evil, or of those who combat it? Will you be of those who destroy, or of those who make whole?

There is no middle course. The indifferent are all on the side of the murderers. To do nothing is one of the worst ways of doing evil.

He who has written these lines is not a man tied down to his desk. He is a man of action, almost a soldier. He has composed this book like the trooper who writes his notes between two battles, on a gun-carriage or the pommel of his saddle. He is black with powder and covered with dust; and the only thing he is absolutely sure of is that life is a strife, and that victory rests with God. When he sees certain young men, then, he feels like sounding a clarion to call them back. Ah! how he wishes that some among those of you who read this book may say: I, too, wish to act the man and wear the sword.

Our time is short. Let us not waste it in words. Farewell! The daily struggle calls me. I leap into the saddle and cry again: God be with you, dear young companions in arms! May he make you joyous, loving, brave!

C. WAGNER.

PARIS, Christmas, 1892.

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BOOK FIRST.

INHERITANCE.

What shall it profit a man if he gain
the whole world and lose his own soul?

JESUS.

There are more things in heaven and
earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your
philosophy. — SHAKESPEARE.

YOUTH.

Book First.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONQUESTS OF THE CENTURY.

WE often see, toward the end of winter, the gardener full of anxious care walking among his espaliers and trellises. He notes the condition of the buds and the wood, and with a careful eye examines the mysterious coverings which the sap of spring will soon swell and burst. These walks, where anxiety is always mingled with hope, suggest to me by analogy another walk, more disquieting still and more interesting,—that which the thinker preoccupied with the future may take among youth. There, also, sleeps, veiled and yet apparent beneath the veil that covers it, the great question of to-morrow. It germinates and grows in the heart of youth; it sets in ferment in their brain things more significant than those which the gardener tries to discover under the covering of his buds.

Always interesting and always worthy of the most sympathetic attention, youth should especially attract

us at critical epochs when changes announce themselves in the mental attitude. Does it not seem that this should be the case at the end of the present century? Doubtless it is a vulgar error to confound periods of human evolution with the arbitrary chronological divisions called centuries. To the centuries are attributed a youth and an old age; one speaks of their dawn and decline. Nothing is further from the truth. Powerful movements have marked the end of some centuries; others have begun in decay and senility. It is none the less true that there may be a coincidence between the end of an historic period and the end of a century. Such I believe to be the case at present. We have behind us a vast development, wherein can be noted, after the enthusiasms of youth and the virile efforts of a brilliant manhood, the hesitations and signs of lassitude common to old age. But as humanity renews itself unceasingly, and is reborn from its ashes, it is at the moment when old things have reached the maximum of decrepitude that new things come to life.

That a time like this we are passing through should be big with the problems of the future, no one can doubt. That these problems present themselves with more insistence to those entering on life than to those already engaged in its affairs or about to leave it, is evident. Nothing is more natural, therefore, than to turn our thoughts to youth, both in its interest and our own.

What will it do? How will it take its place in the world which its predecessors have bequeathed it? What

are its perils, its hopes, its pressing duties? Truly, here is what may excite the most legitimate curiosity.

That we may see clearly into these various questions, it is necessary first to take a sort of inventory, and to characterize briefly the inheritance which falls to our youth; then, to try to understand this youth itself, and some of the modes of thought that distinguish it. We will try, after that, to trace such an ideal scheme of life as shall inspire the flower of our youth for the grand mission imposed upon them,—to avail themselves of the good the departing century leaves them, while striving to fill up its gaps and rectify its errors.

It is always very difficult to unify and group under a single point of view the greatly divergent elements of human activity. But, in general, the salient point of a century is not hard to discover, for it is that characteristic which determines its physiognomy, its tendencies, its beauties, and its defects. If it were designated by a title, indelibly and peculiarly its own, the period which we are leaving could not be called otherwise than the age of inductive science. Knowledge has come little by little, and for the first time since the creation of man, to be the directing power. Though this may appear evident, it is not superfluous to affirm it, because of the superficial idea which is often held of the grand work of man and of that which it is the fashion to call progress. Humanity is commonly represented as marching along a route where each generation marks its stage. There is thus, except for the difference of pace, constant advance along the whole line. This conception is false and dangerous. Not only are there, in the advance of

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society, long halts and retrograde movements, but essential changes of direction. The ideal of certain epochs is perchance at others neglected and even trampled under foot; and often these two epochs work together, each after its own fashion, for the accomplishment of historical ends. There are periods of creation and periods of destruction; there are periods which are devoted to analysis and working in detail, others which are synthetical. These seem asleep; those are as impetuous as a torrent. Certain centuries are religious, poetic, artistic; others commercial, industrial, warlike. They are also effeminate and dissolute, as they are energetic and virtuous. And all bring on the scene their especial characters; chosen sons, made in their image, and pass on in their turn honour and power to dreamers, diplomats, orators, the rash, the wise, fools, favourites, courtiers. But human evolution is so vast and so complicated that it never takes in everything at a time. It advances by successive moves in directions the most varied. Notwithstanding the wealth of its aspirations or its struggles to embrace all, each period of activity makes only its particular advance, to which everything is subordinated, one might even say sacrificed. It thus proves a kind of polarization of the entire work of humanity about a chosen centre. In the particular sphere which it delights to cultivate, a century surpasses, as a rule, those preceding it. But this does not imply that it surpasses or even equals them in other respects. On the contrary, the advantage which it gains by concentrating all its energies in one direction is offset by a loss in other departments.

Centuries, like individuals, have the defect of their qualities. There is here a general law which we must remember. Thanks to it, we understand better how, for example, the ancients, who were our masters in so many things, were only children in science compared to us. And the same law will explain to us, inversely, certain lamentable gaps in existing civilization.

We, then, have made our advance in the direction of inductive science, not through mere fantasy, but driven by necessity. Under the slow wear of time old bases of society and antique creeds have decayed and fallen apart. It was imperative to strengthen them by grasping firmly the facts and ideas which entered into the building of this venerable edifice. That could only be done by going back over the humble path of experience. With a patience proof against all toil, man submitted and set himself to review the world in minute detail. Small and feeble in the face of a giant creation, ephemeral in the face of time without limit, he has not been rebuffed by the mediocrity of his methods nor the extent of the task. Simply, courageously, using his eyes to see, his fingers to touch, his heart to decide, he has set himself to the work. For he has found that the method which consists of deducing one fact from another, advancing from that which is near and known to that which is distant and unknown, is the most marvellous of discoveries. He could review through it, with tiny steps but sure, the most prodigious distances. Workers succeeded one another in their task, often obscure, where even to begin was to undergo a thousand privations. But when one dropped,

another fell into step. How many labours have been forgotten, how many discoveries ignored! Never has humanity appeared more admirable than on this steep road, where we see it advance wearied, wounded, but not rebuffed, holding in its hand the thread of gold which can guide it through the shadows to the dawn of truth.

Thanks to these enormous labours, we possess advantages which cannot be enumerated without emotion and thankfulness.

Astronomers have laid bare the immensity of the universe, and brought within our reach facts whose grandeur surpasses even the imagination. Geographers and explorers have made us know the globe we inhabit. Geologists have told us that it was born in fire, in ages far distant. The natural sciences have begun to instruct us in the numberless forms which life assumes in the vegetable and animal world, and have revealed to us an infinity more wonderful than that which astronomers have shown,—the infinity of small things. Physicians and physiologists have penetrated far in the delicate and difficult investigation of the human body, in order to teach us to know ourselves and to fight more effectively against suffering and disease. The mechanical arts and chemistry have accelerated intercourse, reduced distances, swelled a hundredfold industrial production, and increased the general welfare. Electricity, too, that last ally, which keeps its secret and serves us without our knowing why, has made an advance which seems to belong to the realm of the impossible.

Meanwhile historians have brought back the past, with a tireless activity, piece by piece, often forgetting to live in the present in order to bury themselves in the archives, the catacombs, the exhumed ruins of other days. They have set in their true light, and replaced in their historic frames the legends and the religious traditions of the fathers. They have corrected secular errors, avenged the martyrs, rehabilitated noble memories, scourged crimes, and above all set in their high and deserved place the weak and small, whose sufferings and rude labours have been too long neglected in favour of the wars and intrigues of the mighty of the earth;—great services, too long to enumerate, but which every one can recall.

If we could bring back to us a man of the generations that have disappeared and take him among the marvels which our age owes to science, he would go from astonishment to astonishment, and would surely say to us: It was thus that we dreamed the age of gold. There is no question that the man of the present must find himself happier than he of old, and become better and more the master of himself. Knowing better the laws of Nature, he can conform his life to them. The diseases of yore are unknown to him, as well as its poverty and misery. He rules serenely over docile forces. That which would of old have destroyed him, to-day is his bondman. Fire is harnessed to his chariot, the lightning is his messenger. How this royalty should ennoble him! At the same time the history of the human race has given him great lessons in wisdom, in tolerance, in clemency. Among nations there should be

good will. Justice should govern individuals and societies. Brought up from their youth in the belief of their high station, men should cause peace and fraternity to flourish on the earth which their ancestors soaked with blood. Happy the youth inheritors of such a world!

And this ancient would reason rightly. Why should facts contradict conclusions so natural? Here we are led to consider the reverse of the medal, or what the language of the law would call the inheritance tax.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOSSES OF THE CENTURY.

LET us recall the law of which we have spoken. Humanity does not go forward equally in all directions, but by leaps. In throwing herself so ardently in the direction of science, she has necessarily lost sight of other domains. Great territories, which are integral parts of man's patrimony, have been unconsciously neglected. Further, science itself has felt the reflex action of the law which raised it to the first rank. Too vast to be studied in all its ramifications, it has developed in certain branches in preference to others, and even to their exclusion. We see in the same way, often, one or more branches of a tree absorb nearly all the sap of the trunk, and leave to the others only a diminished sustenance. It was inevitable that in the gigantic undertaking of mastering the world in its smallest detail and sifting its facts and ideas, the elemental bases of all things must first be studied. The mechanical sciences and mathematics, the entire group of natural sciences, would naturally develop first. But as whenever we try to fathom the universe we come face to face with the infinite, so the sciences, at the outset so great in extent, soon seemed the whole of the world. After a time neither the strength nor the lifetime of

investigators sufficed to consider them all. Each man, then, in this limitless field where the roads branch off unceasingly, entered on a single pathway. Investigators scattered, and more and more lost sight of one another. At the same time they all, as a consequence of living among elementary principles, ended by declaring as facts only tangible facts, and by giving the name of science to that which they call, by a title as false as significant, the positive sciences.

During all this, humanity continued to live and to need sustenance. She had followed these hardy pioneers of the remade world in their advance, and was, without suspecting it, far from her base of supplies. She had abandoned her old house before her new one was prepared. It was then that the consciousness of the brevity of life, the longing for something assured, and the need of interpreting life, gave birth prematurely to a philosophy which, seizing the actual results of scientific work, flattered itself that it could reconstruct with their aid the world and humanity, while deliberately ignoring all the accumulated wisdom and faith of the past. Alas! the materials for this reconstruction, marvellous when we consider the labours of those who collected them, were none the less nearly useless in building a world. Could one explain the whole of life with what hardly sufficed to explain a grain of sand or a blade of grass? Rashdest of all attempts! But the bold are always right, at least for a time. That time is passing to-day. We see that we have been too much in haste. After having begun to practise the inductive method, we have abandoned it; we have also

abandoned tradition, in which there is so much really worthy of preservation; and we have made a prodigious leap into hypothesis, establishing conclusions which should have been reserved for the far-off future. In a word, we have thrown away our old bread to make new while the wheat is yet in the blade.

In thus reducing the real to its known proportions we have impoverished ourselves, and, what is truly remarkable, after having seen so many things of which our fathers were ignorant, we have narrowed our horizon. *Man is belittled in his own eyes.* This is the great, the negative result of the scientific development we have sketched.

But let us avoid being misunderstood. We are not of those who accuse certain men for the turn things have taken. No one can direct the life of society in its entirety. Each of us works in his own sphere; the sum total does not depend on his will. We can only be expected to do what seems to us right. If the result does not answer expectation, it is not our affair. We accuse no one, then. Nevertheless, it is always useful to verify a fact and try to understand the situation, that we may draw lessons for the future. Still less do we accuse science. That would be folly and ingratitude. We desire only that science shall from day to day consider all facts worthy of respect, that it shall regain its equipoise and restore to spiritual realities the attention they deserve. We remember, too, that in the movement of science toward materialism, those who have gone the fastest have not been scholars. Many of them have carefully refrained from acced-

ing to what may be called the scientific superstition. But if they have been reserved, others have spoken in their name. There are philosophers and writers who speculate with scientific data assumed *en bloc*, as one speculates with stocks on the bourse.

The belittling of man in his own eyes necessarily appears in all provinces of existence, betraying itself by a weakening of the spiritual life. By a sort of fatality, doctrines based on scientific materialism have invaded the arts and literature, and have spread from there into daily life, creating a lower materialism in which we seem engulfed at this end of the century. Egoism, in painful contradistinction, has profited most largely from the scientific conquests which sacrifice and devotion have won. In its hands they have swerved from their original purpose, and many have done more harm than good.

In pedagogy there are these other results, — utilitarian instruction, which is the breaking to harness of the bread-winner; and intellectualism, which places the centre of gravity of life in the domain of knowledge, as if that were all of man. Instruction has been considered a sufficient means of morality, and made unduly prominent at the expense of the development of character as well as discipline and physical health.

If the world of thought and feeling is cramped by abnormal scientific realism, it would seem, on the other hand, that the material world should have gained largely. There are, in fact, few scientific discoveries which have not been utilized for industrial purposes. And it is true that material good has greatly increased.

We are, as a general thing, better nourished, better lighted, better warmed, better and more quickly taught and transported, better cared for when we fall ill, better armed. Unhappily, there is a reverse to the medal. One of the darkest clouds of the times actually results from this very industrial progress. The methods of production, capital, and machinery have become so vast that they are beyond calculation and direction. Social results, completely unforeseen, often appear. Industrialism rises before us with all its consequences, — industrialism, which crushes man beneath the machine, labour beneath capital, and which has become a source of suffering and hate as much through the physical and moral wretchedness of the labouring classes as through the uncertainty and excitement into which it has thrown commerce and manufactures.

Extreme centralization, which is another consequence of industrial and scientific development, has given us our monster cities, centres of artificial life, where is developed on the one hand pauperism, and on the other undue luxury, — dangerous neighbours, whose proximity is rendered more baleful by the pursuit of facile pleasures, and the creation of a crowd of artificial needs. All these causes taken together have undermined the public health.

In the field of international relations the struggle for existence, dowered by science with wonderfully perfect methods, has engendered militarism, an evil worse than war itself. One might define militarism as the scientific solution of the following problem: Given a union of all the forces of humanity, and all knowledge, as

well as the fullest national resources, to find a method to neutralize them, and even to extract from them all the evil possible.

Our means of locomotion seem at the moment to serve less to draw nations together than to accentuate rivalries. The very accumulation of riches and industrial power has divided man from man, and increased the sharpness of competition and social distances; the very perfection of the implements of war has made nations more distrustful. Their intercourse is rather that of inspection, suspicion, and injury, than a desire to know one another better, and to come together on the common ground of human interest.

The impression which we wish to create seems sufficiently prefaced by these considerations. *Does it not seem, looking at our civilization in a certain light, that a wicked genius has turned to evil all the new forces with which science has enriched mankind?*

How has this come about? Can the scientific method be a bad one? Have we gone astray in desiring to base life on experience instead of continuing to live in the old world of authority and dogma? Not in the least. Our error has been in believing that knowledge and bread are sufficient for humanity, and allowing ourselves to slip from the scientific realism which includes man in the so-called positive knowledge, to a material realism which believes that to be fed, clothed, and housed is the sum of existence.

The best things can become injurious when they outstep their limits. Let us go somewhat into detail to

explain ourselves better, for this is the key to the situation.

Every one knows that there have been at certain historical epochs exclusive powers, which have arrogated the right to direct and fashion humanity according to their own needs and often their own caprices. At one time it was religion, which, outstepping the bounds of its legitimate influence, made the arts, sciences, government, spring from itself. Now it is financial or mercantile power which seizes on society and reduces all human interests to a question of money. Again it is the military power which dictates, to the extent of driving into the background whatever weighs nothing in the balance against physical force. All these powers, legitimate in themselves because they represent a portion of human interest, are public evils when they become exclusive. Intended to serve the general good, they are its worst enemies. Each of them becomes a formidable organization, under which a monstrous collective egoism hides and defends itself, — an egoism in comparison with which that of the individual is as nothing. Such is the egoism of great institutions, of corporations, of castes and classes, of all clericalisms, and all the individualisms. We recognize in them actual combinations of individual interests which degenerate into attempts against society and end in paralyzing life about them. You remember the scribe at the time of Christ, the priest in the confessional at another epoch, and even according to their places and times the sophist of Athens, doctors, astrologers, men of the law, of war, and usurers. At certain periods of history it seems

as if the earth had been created for the especial behoof of one or other of these personages, and the institutions they represent. They became the tyrants of mankind, its very shadow. Without them one could neither advance nor stop, live nor die. Everything belonged to them. Humanity was their possession, their sacrificial victim. Yet the starting-point of these tyrannical atrocities can always be traced to some original service to humanity. Why the decadence that has made them later on the very worst caricatures of what they were at first? It is for this reason: They have sinned against the grand law which defines absolutely the limit of every human institution, — *to serve, not enthrall, humanity.*

I fear that this law has been seriously infringed as respects science. In fact, what do we now see? The continuation of that admirable work which ought one day to represent the honest investigation by man of his impedimenta of facts and ideas? That investigation doubtless continues, and no power can stop it. No; what we do see is the pretence of certain sciences to represent in themselves all human knowledge. And as outside of knowledge there is no longer in the eyes of science thus curtailed any means for man to come in contact with the realities, we see the pretence advanced by some that all reality and all life should be reduced to that which they have verified. Outside of this (and vast as it is, God knows how wretched is the domain compared with the infinite riches of life), there are only dreams and illusions. This is indeed too much! It is no longer science, but scientific absolutism.

There would be no occasion to disturb ourselves if

this pretence had not found a tremendous echo in the world. Let us quote the words of men of authority, that we may not be accused of exaggeration.

In a treatise which has had the widest circulation, *Culturgeschichte und Naturwissenschaft*, the Berlin professor Du Bois-Reymond said in 1877, and his words express the sentiment of a host of serious people who are imbued with the same prejudice: "The history of the natural sciences is the veritable history of mankind. What has been thus called until now is only a history of wars on the one hand, and the foolish conceptions of some civilized people on the other." From a man who more than any other has established and avowed the limitations of human knowledge, and who besides considers that commerce with classical antiquity is the only way to save us from a flat utilitarianism, such a statement is most significant. It is, moreover, a symptom. Already they no longer say: Science and philosophy ought to suffice for humanity. Philosophy has gone into the rubbish heap with religion and poetry. They say science ought to suffice for humanity. And leaping, in one gigantic bound beyond the position, already far enough advanced, of the German savant, one of our contemporary French scholars has left us six words, which will be to future generations evidence of the state of mind of a whole series of generations: "There is no longer any mystery" (Berthelot). Nothing equals the success which these ideas have had in every rank of society. They have spread through thousands of channels, among all classes. For many, for the immense majority, the outcome of science, duly proved

and verified, is the belief that what we call the higher realities do not exist. Man is an animal like the other animals. It is easy to draw this practical conclusion.

At giant step the age has advanced in the path of realism, — scientific at first, practical next, — strewing its way heedlessly with all that constitutes the highest good of humanity. It has replaced the conception of a living world with that of a dead world. Everywhere the mechanical has superseded the spiritual. Materialistic science imputes spirituality neither to the world nor to mankind. For it there is no hereafter. The universe is a mighty piece of fireworks which is destined finally to be reduced to elementary atoms. These are the days when certain scholars speak as if they knew everything. As to the ignorant, they are more positive still; and the greater number of our contemporaries are bitten by the stunted conception of a universe which furnishes no grounds for their beliefs, their conduct, nor even their feelings. What do things such as these amount to in the eyes of scientific realism? Nothing. In such a world the lot of man is to descend to the grade of a machine, and to be, according to circumstances, a machine for work, for study, for enjoyment, for slaughter, a slave of lust, or food for the mitrailleuse.

And this is why, after having worked harder and investigated more thoroughly than any age, we are in danger of foundering in complete nothingness.

The hidden weakness, the flaw in the armour of this grand epoch, has been to forget that there are more things in heaven and earth than the positive sciences, or

even all human knowledge, can prove. Our works have grown greater; we have grown smaller. Man is lessened in his own eyes, in his dignity, and in his aspirations. The crime of high treason against humanity is at the bottom of all the sufferings of our times. Civilization rests on man. Remove man and all the immense machinery is thrown out of gear. It is because its basis, man, is weak that our civilization threatens to crumble about our heads.

And this is not the most striking feature in the picture of the inheritance which our children will receive. That which is more striking still, but which will be its salvation if our successors understand it, is that the world in which we live is thoroughly contradictory. We will try to show how.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE CENTURY.

THE materialistic conception of the world, and such portions of our civilization as are the temporary result of it, seem to us antagonistic to the modern spirit at every point. The modern spirit represents the epitomized inheritance of the ages. The title "modern" indicates only its tendency and methods, not its constituent parts, for they are drawn from every source. It can be well defined in the beautiful words of Terence: *Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto*. The modern spirit is the sum total, condensed, of the best which humanity has drawn from all the mighty labours and all the sufferings of the past. It is, in the domain of thought, a broad outlook over all things, a premeditation to exclude nothing, to see clearly and to find the truth as it is, without any reservation; in a word, the true scientific spirit.

In the domain of the affections, it is a kindly disposition, resolute to despise no one, to defraud no one, to respect in especial the weak, and to have pity on all who suffer. It is, above all, the glorification of labour as the mighty power which makes men free and good.

In politics, the modern spirit is the democratic spirit in its highest sense. It recognizes, as the regulators of society, right, law, justice, and joint responsibility.

If there were, on the one hand, all the power, the united armies, the great and formidable coalition of nations which weigh heaviest in the scale, and on the other Justice disarmed, the modern spirit would demand that all arms should be laid down, and that all interests be silent before Justice.

If there were, on the one hand, the masses with their clamour and transports of rage, and on the other a single wise man with the truth on his side, the modern spirit would be with the one against the many. Such is the modern spirit!

Realism, both scientific and practical, is the negation of all this.

In the domain of thought, realism is the most narrow provincialism one can imagine, — the true parish feeling, which considers nothing outside of its limits. The mighty orchestra of worlds and of lives comes to it only as a faint sound, a monotonous vibration of a single cord.

In the domain of the affections, realism is absolute egoism; it is a decision to consider no one, and to treat as imbecility any concession to a fellow-man which is not the result of calculation. There is only one right, that of the strongest; one law, that of combat. The weak must disappear. Solidarity is nothing but a phrase, conscience a chimera. There is not room for all the world. That some may live, others must die. *Beati possidentes*. Enjoyment is the end of life. Work is considered a drudgery that procures pleasure. It would be much better if we could take our pleasure without it.

In politics, realism is the deification of brute force. In the higher grades of society it is tyranny; in the lower, unbridled license; everywhere it is a savage conflict of interests and passions. It is doomed to oscillate between the despotism of the masses and that of the individual, each devouring the other in turn. Also, always and everywhere, it has destroyed liberty. A democratic realist would be a contradiction in terms.

Realism and the modern spirit are in conflict in the heart of existing society. It is that which makes the situation so tragic, and life seem to us so rich in contrasts, so deeply and so worthily stirred. If we could deify the brute, and organize in all its horrible beauty a civilized barbarism, we should not experience the pangs which torture us. But under the exterior which realism, for the moment triumphant, has imposed on us, lives and suffers a better self. Against every hideous creation with which brutality obstructs progress, the modern spirit raises its voice in protest. And this spirit is not the last sigh of an expiring world; it is a force ever strengthening, though impalpable, which, without belonging to the individual, knows how to declare itself in a thousand ways in the very presence of shame and weakness. When the brute force that acts in animals through claws and talons develops in the breast of man into the fortress, cannon, dynamite, or even the impudent tyranny of the majority and of wealth, then the greater grows this unseen intangible power. It is useless to declare that force dominates right, to call all the lower forms of Nature to witness and to furnish proof of those deeds of violence which make some de-

clare that there is no judge on earth; right is none the less a power against which naught avails. In its own good time it breaks forth, sways all minds, warms every heart, lightens and strikes like the thunderbolt, and the works of brute force are destroyed. Though you try in vain to understand how in this unequal fight he who is the better armed goes down, you can see, in noting the results, that a great and mysterious power has been there.

I make allusion to socialism simply to lay my finger on one of the places where the modern spirit is in sharp conflict with realism. What is socialism, in the large and noble acceptation of the word? It is the assertion of the value of life and the principle of solidarity, the inviolability of the individual, and his indissoluble connection with society. All for each; each for all! To be a socialist it is necessary to have consideration for others,—above all, for the weak, for children, for women, for all that are desolate, outraged, and oppressed. What is done to them is done to ourselves, to humanity, nay, to God. You must, to be a socialist, understand the relations necessary to unite closely the members of society in all stages of development, and you must cherish a kindly feeling for all forms of human life, in order to appreciate the relations of individuals and the most diverse conditions. What is all this from the realist's point of view?

The realist says: Each one for himself. When he has eaten and drunken, the world is bright, and all goes well. When he is hungry, all goes ill, everything must be destroyed. These two ways of regarding life meet

face to face in our society. Nay more, they coexist often in the same persons. Among our contemporaries there are many who have assimilated the materialistic conception of life, and even in their *morale* are realists. But you hear them proclaim the right, invoke justice, and exalt responsibility. It is as if they made a vacuum under a glass for a bird's house. They do not take into consideration the incompatibility between their conception of the world and the men and things they wish to place in it.

We could find material for the same class of remarks in very different spheres. A countless host of men live to-day by expedients and contradictions. They remind us of those creations of artistic imagination, dragons, sphinxes, and fabulous monsters, where the eagle, the lion, the serpent, and man are united in one fantastic animal. Do not imagine that these strange amalgamations are met only among uncultured people. They are everywhere. It cannot be helped, — man is the product of his times. The evidences of the antagonism which runs through the very heart of our existing civilization show themselves in every man. In the discourses of professors, of statesmen, and even of instructors of religion, one meets them. Many a statesman making an address begins by lauding the positive sciences or by laying down utilitarian axioms; but, drawn by his subject into the field of education, of morality, of public order, he ends in absolute idealism.

Matters are, besides, complicated by another factor of considerable importance, — namely, the reactionary movement. The reactionists lay to the account of the

modern spirit all the evils of existing society, and the difficulties with which it contends. They propose to set all right by a return to the *status quo* of the fifteenth century. It is a great undertaking, as can be seen, and we will refer to it again; for this movement has many ramifications, and affects many minds in different degrees. Reactionary minds for one class, those imbued with the modern spirit for another, and a few materialists to boot, — a good many of us are of this way of thinking. In truth, the modern spirit in many people brings to mind house-moving. Part of the furniture is already in the new house; part is in the street, tossed about pell-mell, exposed to the weather and to accidents; part is still quietly installed in the old home. All this makes a crisis and a state of transformation most complicated. In a time of simple habits the suffering which such a crisis produces is lessened by outside circumstances; but in our day our culture increases the complication, which is, in short, found in every department, spiritual and material alike. The men of our day have been taken unaware by a too abrupt change of the conditions of existence. Events have overstepped them and led them astray. The accumulated results of the causes we have set to work without knowing their power, trouble and frighten us. The more complex an organism is, the more it suffers. A man dies of a wound, while some inferior organisms live though cut to pieces. A carriage may lose a wheel without great danger; for a locomotive it is a catastrophe.

At this very time civilization has become an immense machine whose workings escape the foresight of the

wisest ; it goes on its devilish way, and in the midst of its uproar man cries out as he feels himself beneath its wheels.

The recent past leaves us a work grand but incomplete ; it lacks a united spirit, a soul. In face of prodigious accumulation of material strength, of riches, of knowledge, we are continuously impoverished in moral energy, in fraternity, in faith ; but the greatest failure has been man.

We must produce men who can govern themselves, and become masters of the new world in order to acquire the good that is in it. We can reach this end by a return to normal thinking, which is the application of the inductive method to all human facts, and, above all, to the forgotten realities of the spiritual world ; by a return to a normal way of living, — to reverence, to a feeling of responsibility, to work, and to simplicity ; by strengthening, in a word, the modern spirit as we have defined it, and by placing at its disposition all the resources with which science has endowed us.

But is such an undertaking possible ? Can youth, upon whom in great measure the task will fall, rise to the situation ? Has it the knowledge ?

If the proverb, " As are the fathers, so are the sons," is true, — if heredity, if the path already marked out, if the surroundings, are the grand determining influences of youth, — what awaits that of to-day, if not a continuance of our errors ? Are the sons wiser than their fathers ? It is rare, but nevertheless it has been known. But we will make no conjectures.

BOOK SECOND.

THE HEIRS.

The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and
the children's teeth are set on edge.

EZEKIEL.

Book Second.

CHAPTER I.

THE WORLD OF YOUTH.

IN society, always and everywhere, youth is the medium through which the qualities and the shortcomings of the social structure best show themselves. They appear like the refracted rays of the prism, more startling in their separation and in the contrasts of the spectral grouping. All the range of colours is there, with a vigour of tone which excludes intermediate shades. Youth sings the praises of its season in the streets, and shouts its fantasies from the housetops. It is in it that are found the most serious predilections toward vice and the most powerful impulses toward virtue. It must necessarily be so. With its natural enthusiasm, its habit of jumping at conclusions, and its disregard of consequences, youth carries to extremes the work of its predecessors. It is pure assumption to say that the disciples follow the master. The disciples go too fast for that. In general, the masters follow them and strive in vain to hold them back. This is true not only of studious youth but of all youth. We are at school or college till a certain age, and they are not always the best lessons which are listened to most closely. The force

of example and of impulse is perhaps greater in the youth of the people than in those of the schools. Opinions which take hold of the highest intelligences spread among the masses more quickly than one would think. Through what hidden interstices do they infiltrate the heart of the illiterate herd? No one knows. But it is a fact that a few years often suffice to disseminate certain new currents of thought from the university centres to the humblest hamlets. When the thought is pernicious, its effects are more apparent in proportion as it makes its way among a simple-minded people. It acts then as alcohol on savages. The youth of the people is perhaps the field wherein the ravages of unwholesome lessons can be most clearly observed. We find there rendered in the vulgar tongue practical illustrations of this enough to make the hair stand up on one's head.

We cannot watch nor study youth too closely. Without our suspecting, it gives as many lessons as it receives.

Some, it is true, speak of it only under their breath and with a shrug. For them, youth means disrespect, conceit, and a satisfied ignorance that criticises what it does not understand. It is the age of irreverence, folly, and noise, which follows its breakneck course, without regard for any one, through the peaceful habits of sober citizens.

Others speak of youth cynically always, with a smile of connivance which recalls the old augurs. For them youth is synonymous with riot and disorder. Men of pleasure, who regard life not as a sacred deposit but as

so much pocket-money to throw away right and left at a show, consider that young people are lucky to be at the top, when they themselves have long since reached the bottom of the purse.

A third class of people there is, who consider youth as in the way, with the malevolence of an old father who knows that his son is waiting for his money. They bear youth ill-will because it is full of life and enjoys the sunshine and will probably survive them. A bad disposition this! It is like turning to the coming spring the scowling forehead of departing winter. It will not hinder the grass from growing and the flowers from blooming.

It is true that youth has given some justification for these different ways of looking at it. There is an irreverent youth, a youth of dissipation, a youth longing for its patrimony, and lacking not only tact toward those who are nearing the end of life, but gratitude for the service they have rendered. There are conceited youth, who fancy that nothing can go rightly without them; and Heaven knows how irritating they are! But all these extravagances are but one aspect of the world of youth. I readily admit that in certain of its details it is as bad as possible, that it is the delight of blockheads and the despair of the wise; but notwithstanding all this, I affirm that there is in it material of the very best. It is too often forgotten; and this forgetfulness, this lack of confidence and of observation, is a great misfortune.

I have never looked at a child's head at some graceful period in its development without being struck

with the wealth of hope and promise which surrounds its young life. It is the touching and truthful prophecy of a perfect humanity. Oh! who can make us know what this little head contains, can teach us to develop and ripen all that is waiting in it to express itself? Ah, well, there is a sight more beautiful than that of a lovely child in perfect health. It is the figure of a youth at the time when he, though still a lad, is yet a man, in full possession of that virginity of his entire being which makes him, while devoting himself to no one thing exclusively, take a kindly interest in every one and be earnestly inquisitive as to everything. Assuredly at that time of life we are better than later on; and the wisest thing the mature man can do is to remain true to the first impression of his youth and to cherish always its fruitful memory.

At certain moments of force and inspiration the young man lives on a higher plane of feeling, he possesses treasures in himself, he is the king of hope; but he is a suffering king. Youth is the age of the most cruel and most violent griefs. Those who speak of its light-heartedness have never understood it, or have long since forgotten. It is a dolorous royalty which carries on its brow a crown of thorns. From the outset youth perceives of itself more acutely than any one the contrast between the good dimly seen but loved, and the evil possible and often actual. Then its heart is broken every day by contact with life. Magnificent and miserable at the same time, it knows in all its profundity the bitterness of the disillusion which come in contrasting what it feels with what it

sees going on in the world. And this grief of youth is not a childish thing, as is claimed by men who call themselves positivists, but are really only fools. It is a most holy thing, for it contains the hope of something better. From it comes salvation. In vain shall the world grow old and even impart to new generations its decrepitude by heredity and example; it cannot hinder now and then the birth and development of beings endowed with an exquisite freshness of impressions. Set these beings, full of healthful curiosity and all generous impulses, in the framework of a narrow tradition, a clericalism, a particularism, a utilitarianism, a tyranny of some sort, and in this rarefied situation they will suffer martyrdom, they will be homesick for air and liberty like captive birds, their grief will make itself heard; they will appeal to every better instinct, to every soul like their own in the past, to every sympathetic force of nature or man, to help them fight that which crushes them; they will break their irons, unless, indeed, their irons break them. In that case how great the suffering! The hosts of martyrs in every cause, dead in their youth, stand forth to witness it. But I do not speak of them only; I speak of the youth which has suffered from jest and scoff because of the dream of beauty within it. Its name is legion, and will always be. The more the world strays from the normal path, the more heavily it falls back on the shoulders of the young. Weighed down under chains they have not forged, they plan in their suffering a liberty from which they will, perhaps, never profit. I say that this youth is the most beautiful of all. It is immortal. It is born unceasingly from

the best blood of humanity as a reverent and faithful heir of the treasures of the past, to increase and hand them on to the future. Its watchword is: Begin anew, ever begin anew!

Let us never forget this. In reviewing contemporary youth, its weaknesses, its shortcomings, let us remember this for our comfort. It is a never-failing source of courage, of healing, of alleviation; it is the true fountain of youth, whose source is hidden in the dark recesses of a soil man's hand can never reach.

CHAPTER II.

INTELLECTUAL ORIENTATION.¹

ORIENTATION is, in general, no slight affair. That this manifold, rich, incomparable thing we call life may find in the soul of man a representation, not complete, but adequate and above all harmonious, what a union of efforts must there not be! Life is always, and in all ages, a problem; but there are epochs when the solution seems to be more or less found. The sons, then, have but to step in the footprints of their fathers. But this is not the case in our day. Our fathers left off in uncertainty. Under nearly all its forms the grand problem of life has now assumed a critical character. In whatever quarter of the horizon we look, a silent sphinx is seated. Such are the environments of our youth. Would that it were beset by circumstances only, and left free to disentangle itself! But men have intermeddled to interpret things according to their own fashion, to pervert them to their necessity, and to exercise over youthful generations a disturbing influence. It is, then, a difficult task to characterize such a state of things. As well strive to fix the shifting

¹ Orientation, which is here used figuratively, is defined by Webster: "The process of determining the points of the compass or the east point in taking bearings."

picture of the waves. We will try, nevertheless, but with the feeling that we shall fall far short, though we speak only of things seen and lived.

We will begin by considering the great current of thought which is met oftenest in the world, and which is the logical sequence of the situation created by the departing century. Next after this we will examine the reactionary movement, that we may end by showing certain signs of a new point of view.

When the young man fitted by special studies has doubled the cape of his first examinations and reached the university, two great tasks await him, — to assimilate a curriculum, and to form a conception of the world. The first is necessary to a career; the second if he would become a man. Of these two tasks one is as strictly defined, as scrupulously regulated, as the other is left to chance. Let us speak of the first. It is study in its true sense. What principally distinguishes our studious youth in this connection is its warm interest in knowledge. There are to-day numbers of hard-working young men in all its departments. Among what may be called the *élite* of intellect work is rough and severe. It is not rare for a student to shut himself into his room, bar his door, and live for a time the life of the cloister. Necessity, besides, urges him on. To attain a result it is not enough to employ the proper methods, there must be that sustained application, that abnegation, which the assimilation of scientific facts demands. Formerly personal application, research, the introduction of new facts were of more importance, because everything was yet to be done. Each domain

had any number of unexplored corners. Now that kind of activity has decreased, and the other, the study of assimilation, has increased. Before investigating and thinking for one's self, which is the delight of the intellectual life, it is necessary to open laboriously a road across the mountains of information accumulated by others. One is full of zeal to set out and explore, full of curiosity as to everything; but stop, — there are so many instructions to receive, so many provisions to take along, that one grows old and has spent one's best energies in preparation. Intellectual youth enters on unknown contests with the impossible which are tragic to behold.

The first result of this kind of work is overtraining, a sort of hyperesthesia of the receptive faculties, with a crushing of individual effort under this extraneous material, and mental barrenness. The other result is increasing specialization. The force of circumstances confines each man to his own department. This is particularly true in the exact and natural sciences, where the limits are clearly defined. In literature, history, etc., it is difficult not to look occasionally out of the enclosure; but there also the mass of material obliges a man to keep within bounds, and when he aspires to some wide range shuts him up in the narrow limits of a precise period. Thus, little by little, the survey of adjacent provinces is lost. With a maximum of trouble we gain a minimum of pleasure, and our horizon is narrowed. This is not a loss peculiar to our country. It is a consequence of the existing state of human knowledge. The material collected is enormous, and it is not yet set in

order. Knowledge exists only in fragments. No one can conceive its entirety, nor, above all, declare its *rôle* in the harmony of human affairs. It thus comes about that a man is interested in his own specialty only. The privilege of ignoring facts foreign to his own province has long been allowed the scholar. Youth necessarily takes advantage of this privilege. What other course has it? But the necessary consequence of this intellectual *régime* is the difficulty of generalization, and the difficulty, nay, the impossibility, of forming a conception of the world.

We have now reached the second part of the task which is incumbent on youth. Whether or no, each one makes his own philosophy. When it is not positive, it is negative, and it is no small shame to a man to be obliged to write "Nothing" when he is asked what are his views of life.

In this respect the life of studious youth of to-day is very different from that of its predecessors. They received a different kind of education. They were held fast by many ties to old traditions and ancient beliefs. The great humanizing breath of the last century still affected them. They lived in a part of that complex heritage, thinking at the time that they lived only in what they knew. Thus in the midst of these great agglomerations of cities, many workers, shut up in too close air, owed their vigour and their health to the robust constitutions they had brought from the fields. Their successors of the second and third generation live less easily, and succumb in a place where perhaps the others would have thrived, thanks to their healthful

antecedents. It is the same in the province of thought with the youth of to-day. Its predecessors have cleared the field of all that constitutes the domain of general ideas, — that vast spiritual capital which thousands and thousands of years of human thought had slowly laid away in the depths of the soul, as the array of fauna and flora long since disappeared have left their imprint in geologic strata. There is lacking to these last comers, too, a number of advantages from which their fathers profited without suspecting it; and it is on this account that they sometimes find the new generation strange. But when we look closely at it, we are not surprised.

Our work has increased and become complex, and the conception of the world and mankind which has sprung from materialism no longer gives the worker satisfaction. Why so much labour to beautify, direct, and investigate a life which is only nothing? Why so many pains, if, after all, goodness, justice, truth, are only idle fictions, and if universal vanity enwraps as well our knowledge as our ignorance, our most noble efforts as well as our most ignoble indolence?

To this must be added the uncertainty which has sprung up with regard to knowledge itself. The generations which preceded us had replaced the old beliefs with a new one, — the belief in knowledge. What Renan wrote in 1848 may serve as the expression of opinion of a host of men, still living, who for many years have directed thought: "For myself, I know but one result of science; it is to solve the enigma, to tell man definitely the names of things, to explain him to himself. It is to

give him in the name of the only human authority — that is, the whole of human nature — the symbols which religion gave him ready-made, and which he can no longer accept. Yes, there will come a day when man *will believe no longer, he will know*; a day when he will know the world of metaphysics and morals as he knows already the physical world." How strangely these words sound to our youth! Hardly half a century is behind them, yet they seem to come from the depths of the far-off past. There is an abyss between elderly and mature men and the young generation of scientists. The latter love science; but how far they are from thinking that we know the physical world, and how much farther still from thinking that we can know the world of morals or even of metaphysics! Many of our young contemporaries, in default of a better, have adopted the philosophy of the unknowable; thus establishing at least a negative category to mark the place of the appalling and tremendous horizons which stretch away to the infinite, beyond human knowledge. A clearer separation between its different provinces no longer allows them to class as knowledge all the forms through which the real is accessible to us. Here is the starting-point for a number of new prepossessions, to which we will return later, for they are cherished by a few. The greater number have drawn for themselves another conclusion. The contradictions of science, opposing systems deduced from the same facts, analysis as exaggerated as questionable applied to human thought, have shaken for them the very foundation of knowledge, which, after all, is only a confidence in

the existence of men and things. They are no longer sure of anything, no more sure of knowledge than of conscience.

It is for this reason that our young workers generally, though ardent, are not enthusiasts. Their ardour has its source in those unknown depths whence comes to man his best aspirations, and which connect him with the real notwithstanding his ignorance and his voluntary shortcomings. Enthusiasm would be the same ardour with the addition that it had taken cognizance of itself and its ideal. But this is a thing positive science cannot permit to its disciples. How many are there, of these young lives, laborious and needy! New ascetics they, who by reason of cultivating in themselves knowledge as the one thing only, end by condemning themselves in everything else to inanition. When some day the future shall have completed the synthesis of the vast total of materials which we are preparing, and when our descendants shall enter on one of those periods of life, broad and complete, where humanity, in possession of its formula for a time, pursues its march in peace and security, it will be grateful beyond expression to these workers who labour over detail without daring or being able to rise to the whole. Their merit is the greater in that they have less of hope.

How long a time could one live thus in complete spiritual anarchy, without a firm base, without a homogeneous direction?

There are many and significant indications of unrest among the best minds. Youth, as it comes, asks its way. It is answered: There is but one, — knowledge.

It dashes forward; but hardly has it set out when ten roads present themselves instead of one. It is urged in the most opposite ways, and always in the name of knowledge. It hears the title of knowledge refused to morality, to history, to psychology. Out of its reckoning, it is in doubt as to its course. The situation is serious. The better minds disagree, and lose courage in the long run. The superficial or commonplace get out of it more easily; they declare in a very short time that the *pros* and *cons* are equal, and they, like the others, become sceptics.

Instructors and men qualified to judge have declared on many occasions, in these latter times, that scepticism has not affected the youth of France, that the spirit of the nation was opposed to this malady as well as to pessimism. Alas! though one is a Frenchman and a Gaul, one is no less a man, exposed to the dangers which exclusive tendencies have created in human nature. When we elevate one human faculty into the only arbiter and the supreme law, we can be very sure that we not only wrong the others, but that what we wish to establish on their ruins is seriously compromised. To live at all, man must be alive everywhere. Certain extreme and debilitating regimens induce indifference and scepticism, no matter what their latitude or their nationality. The truth is, that thoughtful youth which tries to account to itself for things, and desires to reach the light about itself, has suffered for a number of years. It has known scepticism thoroughly and entirely, and is still far from a cure.

This state of mind is largely shown in the writings of

the younger generation. We recognize throughout these productions minds which have suffered severe mutilation, and which on that account can traverse the immensities of history and of the soul without meeting anything but nothingness. These writings, by way of compensation, in all that concerns external mechanism are usually extraordinary. It is natural to see youth put into its work an ardent spirit, and one so sure of itself, so absorbed in its own enthusiasms, as to be careless of form. We have under our eyes the exact contrary, — much facility, little inspiration, and still less assurance. Here is what Monsieur Sully-Prudhomme writes as to poetry in especial, in the preface to a book by a youth, which is a direct exception to the present rule, *Jeunesse pensive poésies de A. Dorchain*: "There has never, perhaps, been more verse published in France than during these last years, and these verses are for the most part well done. Nearly all beginners astonish one by a singular precocity; the most secret artifices of versification are familiar to them, they are accomplished virtuosos, — in a word, they know their trade. But never has the trade been more clearly distinguishable from the true art, for it must be said that those who have cleverness are much more numerous than those who have inspiration."

Charming literary forms covering an abyss of disillusion! In truth, wherever we look, in literature as in art, we are face to face with the same heart-breaking phenomenon. One meets only dainty and delicate expressions, the sentiments of men who believe in nothing. In philosophy, the sciences, the arts, the decay of

principles is complete. Youth arrives on the field like the volunteer companies in long wars, when affairs are well under way. On all the roads where it would advance it sees stragglers returning, who have thrown away their arms and declare that nothing can be done. It requires much less energy to go toward the unknown, even when most formidable, with a glow of hope at heart, than to take the mental roads where one meets every instant the vanquished and wounded. The grand horizons of thought therefore are almost deserted.

I mention only incidentally a certain dilettanteism which interests itself in everything and holds to nothing. How shall we consider this *au sérieux* without becoming the object of the indulgent irony of its adepts? This affected and unwholesome turn of mind has none the less had a great influence over youth. There has been in these days only too great a number of men, young in years but blighted by premature decay, who, without affirming or denying, without believing or doubting, are seated on the edge of the arena to observe the vanity of human thought and of all that is done, and are satisfied to smile where others give their heart, their life, their blood.

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The religious feeling in such a state of affairs can be imagined. Among those who have not received special instruction in their youth, there is none whatever. Others have seen their childish beliefs give way at the first contact with scientific negations. Among those who have preserved traces of a religious education, it is rather because of the persistence of their impressions

and habits than by reason of any mental process. Divided between a certain mode of thought and the operations of science, they live in two worlds. It is a *modus vivendi* between the heart faithful to its memories, and the intellect which no longer recognizes them. There is, on this subject, in many young minds an incredible but touching medley of contraries. Sometimes this heterogeneous medley begins to ferment, and then those who have made it the whole of their spiritual life experience rude shocks and cruel sufferings. Still, in general, it can be said that the Voltairian spirit has disappeared. There is a special variety of it confined to-day to some fanatics of free thought, and unhappily to the lower orders. There has been uttered such a prodigious quantity of nonsense in the name of free thought, that those who pride themselves on culture dread to be suspected of it. But it begins to be understood that religion is the chief thing to the individual and to society, and not an imposture or disease. We are moving upward; in the chapter which we call "The Paths of To-morrow," we shall have the pleasure of pointing out a new current in that direction.

It is natural that the class of youth which gives itself to religious study as a vocation or career should occupy an exceptional position. We will content ourselves by noting some drifts of thought in it. The first distrusts the modern spirit in general, and intrenches itself in the traditions of its respective churches; it can perhaps be classed as reactionary. Another, stirred to its depths by contemporary negations, swerves in their direction, and little by little loses sight of

spiritual realities, and despairing of saving anything from tradition and faith, is finally engulfed in doubt. The third clears itself laboriously a road toward a new belief, where the past is joined to the conquests and necessities of the present. By this small number, unsparing toward self and lovers of truth and justice, is worked out the interesting evolution of the hour from which shall go forth the religious thought of to-morrow.

Here as everywhere, alas! in too great numbers are the lukewarm, the slothful, and the clever, who go whither the wind and impulse drive them.

CHAPTER III.

MORAL ORIENTATION.

IF such be the situation in the domain of the intellect, what is it in the domain of morals? It is in vain that we try to separate the idea of morality from the intellect. There is no such thing as an independent morality. Nothing in man is independent of the sum total of human tendencies. Each is conditioned on another, and is reciprocally affected. At a certain epoch bold spirits flattered themselves that they had suspended morality in space. They suppressed faith to maintain morality. They believed in morality, and transformed it into a dogma. Good, evil, and the rights of men were to them the supports of the world. They were both wrong and right,—right in admitting that the moral world has its eternal laws, discovered and ratified by conscience, and better discerned little by little by humanity in its slow ascent toward the light; wrong in admitting that conscience can communicate with reality if the intellect is declared useless. If a man is to a certain extent incapable of knowing the truth, he is also incapable of distinguishing good from evil. If the reason, if dogma, which is, after all, the expression which the intellect tries to give to the higher realities, are not empty hallucinations,—if they do not include under

a logical or symbolic form portions of that which is, — conscience herself also is powerless. The conclusion which we have drawn is the logical one. The destruction of moral principles has corresponded, first and last, with the destruction of general ideas. This age has not, like some others, known brilliant personalities who represent in the eyes of the young the epitome of a whole age, and who have been to them, from their chairs in the universities, a note of inspiration and a general watchword. There are, however, professors outside the universities to fill this mission; but, alas! of a different character. These leaders of the day are writers, more particularly of romances, who have most broadly assimilated the realistic conception of the universe, and are now among the professors of fatalism. More positive than the scholars, as are those who take their knowledge at second hand, they have knocked together, out of the rudimentary ideas of an infant physiology, a complete psychology and a complete sociology. Making pretence of an absolute positivism, they have everything divided, weighed, and measured. Imperturbably, having cut, as they think, the human heart into thin slices as others have cut and photographed the brain, they expose it in detail, demonstrating its mechanism, and labelling its fibres. Their writings, in which they say with so much skill and assurance the most untrustworthy things, become fountain-heads. After the vulgarizers of the first degree come those of the second, the third, the tenth, each more positive than the last. Youth has read and accepted much of this literature, which seems to it the final utterance of science applied

to humanity. At this very moment, notwithstanding certain new and favourable indications, it is strongly entrenched among the mass. Not only have liberty, responsibility, good and evil in the old acceptance of the term, no more meaning, but all the individual responsibility of man in his destiny is considered problematical. Some deny it peremptorily. We hear fluent discussions on unconsciousness, irresponsibility, heredity, crimes of the passions, — all things which should be treated with the greatest reserve from their gravity and privacy, yet which circulate in young heads, as the doctors circulated in our veins a certain German lymph before knowing whether it were not the worst of poisons. There has resulted from this an ethical condition especially distressing and dangerous at the time when are formed those traits of character which always remain in our moral physiognomy. No one can deny that the feeling of responsibility, that basis of individual conduct, has been seriously weakened.

Nevertheless, the point of view of an outspoken materialistic morality is left behind, and moral ideas have passed through a still more perilous phase to acquaintance with dilettanteism and scepticism; thus paralleling the movement in the domain of the intellect. We have undergone successively all these dislocations. After negation, brutal, curt, and self-confident, has come the period of indifference, of doubt, and at last of dispassionate curiosity. Why deny rather than affirm? What do we know about it? To question oneself as to whether things are good or bad is as puerile as to question whether they are true or false. A superior mind does not trouble

itself with such trivialities. It looks on at moral phenomena, whether objective or subjective ; it judges neither itself nor any one else, and wraps itself in a vague sentiment which is universal good-will or universal indifference, we cannot tell which. One of these minds, freed from those trivialities for which so many poor, brave martyrs have already died and are still dying, said : " We owe the gospel a great debt of gratitude ; for in purifying our conscience it has given to sin all the attraction of a forbidden fruit." Others, speaking of the most heart-breaking phases of immorality and decay, say : " The times grow interesting and amusing. The most diverting follies offer themselves in crowds, for our indulgent curiosity." It is useless to insist further on a thing known of the whole world. Our intellectual youth, according to its age, its degree of culture, the special career to which it destines itself, has passed more or less through all the stages we note, and notwithstanding the incessant modifications which are the sign of a restless and investigative age, it offers examples of all the states of mind through which its favourite authors have passed.

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This twofold dislocation, intellectual and moral, of which we are speaking, has resulted in weakening the perception of reality and in lessening activity.

Let us speak now of the first. The perception of the real consists in seeing thoroughly what one sees, in feeling thoroughly what one feels, in understanding thoroughly what one understands, in interesting oneself and taking part, *in believing that a thing actually*

exists : there is no better phrase to express my thought than this. To believe that a thing actually exists — be it the establishment of a fact, material, intellectual, or moral, a colour, a perfume, a good glass of wine, or a good action — is the sign of perfect health and vital integrity. All physical or moral perturbations diminish this parent faculty ; but it is weakened, above all, when by reason of turning things over and over, analyzing them from every point of view, distrusting them entirely, " looking for noon at fourteen o'clock," and juggling with our thoughts, our feelings, and our consciences, we inflict on ourselves a kind of vertigo of our whole being. It is absolutely contrary to nature that man's intelligence or conscience can look at *pros* and *cons* without being interested more in one than the other. It is fatally unsettled by all this, and through adapting itself to all sorts of contraries becomes deformed and puerile. It is natural that man should interest himself in what passes within him, not as though it were an idle pastime, but a fixed and important fact. He must put himself into it ; he must be it. Otherwise he retains no more impressions of what he has received than a mirror. He loses at the outset the perception of reality, the right of good sense. He loses, also, reverence, which is our way of estimating reality. The dilettante, the sceptic, the sophist, lose reverence. All their politeness, all their smiles at phenomena, are only a form of contempt. But he who loses reverence for things loses still more that for words, which are only the reflections of things. He will juggle with words as well as ideas. Where,

then, is truth? If words are no more to be depended on, in what shall we trust? We shall be among people who think it as intellectual to change their words as their ideas, and convert them endlessly. From this simulated world this will pass rapidly into life. Our society, old and young, begins to be greatly affected by lack of reverence and lack of truth. One has only to look at the press, that ugly photograph of our world, to see by a thousand examples to what abuse speakers and writers can descend when, in the entire absence of fixed principles to regulate judgment and conduct, words are only the shadow of a shade. In truth, the interest which attaches itself to these chameleons who change their colour at their pleasure, declare black white, and present a fact favourably or unfavourably at will, is for youth a most detestable example. To have but one colour and one view of a question is monotonous; it shows a mind without resource. He who knows how to live has many strings to his bow, and can duplicate, triplicate, and multiply himself. Old-fashioned duplicity is only child's play, in comparison with that of men who form by themselves alone an anonymous society, of which no member is responsible.

All this holds together and follows like the links of a chain or the cogs of a gear. But we have not done. After the disintegration of the right appreciation of things, comes the disintegration of activity and energy, as an inevitable sequence. When, passing through negation, uncertainty, instability, incoherence, and intellectual and moral gymnastics, we have reached the highest point in the unreal, ideas lose all force. A

certain fixity of thought is necessary to produce action; the man must be identified with his ideas. Action is incompatible with too great mobility of mind. A mind which vibrates again and again, and always with equal interest in every impression, is like a field which is reploughed and resown every week. There is no need to trouble about the harvest. Each labour destroys the last. But not only is the will sterilized; step by step we come to despise real life and action. Nothing is more alluring than this perpetual sloughing of the inner man, on which we have our eye fixed as on a kaleidoscope. The world of action is a grosser plane, where men of limited abilities are engaged. "The characteristics of the most admired among men of action are at bottom only mediocre." In formulating this prodigious maxim Monsieur Renan has expressed the views of many contemporaries, especially the young, whether distinguished or not. It may be objected to these dainty thinkers, that man is always mediocre to some other man. A good soldier, I fancy, would be a mediocre comedian, a skilled prize-fighter a mediocre acrobat; and, judged by one of those examples of contortion which are called men-serpents, even Milo of Crotona would be mediocre.

The will becomes atrophied when belief is gone. To persuade a person that he is incapable is to make him act as an incapable. How many young children richly endowed have had their wits blunted and annihilated by teachers who always treated them as fools! By continual snubbing and discouraging, one ends by making them self-distrustful. It is the same with all human

aptitudes. The will has been subjected to deplorable influences in our day, whose ill-omened aggregations have resulted in weakening and enervating it. One of these destructive influences is the wind of fatalism which has blown over us. Why exert oneself to struggle? There is no individual initiative. An incontestible necessity rules the soul and the world. To reform self, to fight the passions, the besetting sins, or to rise against the evils of society, is folly. Leave all that for the poor in spirit. Leave to them their innocent craze of getting themselves burned and crucified for the good of others; but pray let us not imitate them! Ideas like these are poison to youth.

It is in the order of things for the impressions of its age to be lively and wholesome, for youth to take hold of a thing impetuously, to create for itself an ideal, to be full of enthusiasm for noble deeds and noble characters, to act with that ardour which has made us love even its exaggerations and imprudences. But all this has greatly changed. In place of the dishevelled heads of old, symbolic of so many eccentricities, we now see locks neatly brushed over brows that have done with all illusion. Our best youth seems so reserved, so hesitating, that some think it too wise. Without doubt we should here make great allowance for circumstances. Even without the problems of intellect and morals, which they have to face, there remain on its hands many serious causes for anxiety. But it is no less true that the intellectual and moral orientation of the last generations is of a kind to paralyze action. It is a double misfortune when it introduces itself in an

epoch like this. When we consider the life which awaits our youth, the labours and efforts which it ought to produce, we are seized with an invincible hatred of those doctrines of nothingness which have been for so many years the greater part of its nourishment. Enough of negations! enough, above all, of jugglers and *poseurs*! Give us men of faith and action, of love and hate, with a clear-seeing eye, a breast that throbs, a vigorous arm; men who, emancipated from idle fancies and the empty din of words, are silent, and putting their hands to the plough, drive, as their witness, a straight furrow in the field of life.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCHOOL OF LIFE.

QUESTIONS of an intellectual and moral character are not the only ones that urge themselves upon our youth. We might even say that the greater number are entirely outside their pale,—all the youth of the people, for instance, to whom these things exist only vaguely. We shall take occasion to speak of this class. But even among studious youth these questions do not concern the majority; and the minority, troubled and occupied with the grave problems of the day, finds itself broken in upon by the practical. Outside the sphere of universities, surrounding it as the waves do an island, stretches the great school of life.

To investigators and thinkers, as well as to those whom research appalls or does not interest, and who make themselves a summary of philosophy from crumbs picked up at hazard, the world of reality is that which demands attention and imposes its conditions and its example. Theories of philosophy, systems of morality, and religious doctrines are one thing; life is quite another. Its lessons are more powerful than theories, for good or evil. That which passes in politics, in finance, in the trades, in the daily come and go of the world, the relations between comrades and friends, the

family relations,—all these cannot fail to influence growing minds. They are, too, moulded by party spirit, or at least influenced by it. Youth is a nursery where the future is growing. It is right and fair for it to take a hand in what is passing, and to try to develop itself in the right direction. This direction for men in the battle of life is their own. In the midst of their struggles they look to the future and scan it for help. An action so direct and so energetic as to amount almost to moral violence often results.

This irruption of life into the mind of youth makes itself felt, especially in questions of the future. From day to day the number of young men embracing practical careers increases, and these grow more and more crowded. As a result of this the desire of success becomes so pressing as to dominate everything. It is a preparation on a small scale for the grand struggle for existence which goes on everywhere in the field of economics. It is difficult to think of anything else when one has entered this treadmill of material interests. But even those whose studies do not bring them daily face to face with figures and economics, and who are preparing for the liberal professions, cannot escape the cares of the morrow. Material life, and all that combination of complications and needs which it brings, forces itself on their attention, and intermingles constantly with the ideas which they form of men and things. The adage *primo vivere, deinde philosophari* is one of those to which the young man of to-day accustoms himself in spite of himself.

The desire of success is that legitimate ambition of

every man to take his place in the world and secure his livelihood. It is the duty of a young man of sound mind to concern himself with this; and the position of him whom fortune raises above these petty worries is not without serious drawbacks. But there is a great difference between a desire for success subordinated to the interests of knowledge and conscience, in fine, to a higher end, and the same desire when it is the only guide and only objective point. The acuteness of economic problems, the realistic turn of the mind of the day, and the mode of life by which youth is surrounded, have destroyed in it the equilibrium between questions of the ideal and the material. To a large number of young men there is but one question, that of success. Among these some are modest and are content with little, others are greedy and want a great deal. To succeed is not enough; it is necessary to push, to pass others, to rule. They come to using teeth and claws as hardily as the lower animals. They come more surely and more appropriately to using finesse. This last method is the one practised by those we term young diplomats. Let us hang up their portrait here.

Ambitious rather than needy, they despise the vulgar struggle. They prefer the tactics of the fox to the fury of the wolf. From this realistic age they have learned, first and foremost, that facility is necessary for success; and they have laid in a stock of it. Their minds are a well-stocked arsenal, of which they know how to avail themselves at the proper time. Always of the opinion of whomsoever they meet, and, according to circum-

stances, cheerful or grave, honest or dishonest, they attack men on their weak side. Life for them is a matter of business, or better, a chessboard. Sentiments, ideas, interests of their own as well as others, are the pawns which they move dispassionately. To be absorbed in any one thing would be ruinous. What among chivalrous people would be called a mean action is for them simply cool cleverness. They are always careful to cultivate those scruples in others whose absence in themselves gives them their strength. These young old men are unimpressionable; they never laugh, — a laugh shows a weak mind, — but they feel pity, and reserve it entirely for their poor friends who, enamoured of sincerity, wish to own their advancement in the world to work and merit only. Nevertheless the young diplomat will do his utmost to supplant his good friends. He loses no opportunity to push himself, to nurse his little reputation, to call upon ladies of influence. He knows how to advertise himself discreetly, so as to appear as if he were some one of importance. He is announced as forthcoming on the stage of the world, as certain actors on their tours put on their placards, "X. is coming." You are quite sure that it is not he who placards himself; he is astonished, and complains of this hubbub of fame which outrages his modesty.

As to tender sentiments, the young diplomat distrusts them. If he ever chances to love, it will be with the head. The heart is full of surprises which upset all calculations. That must never be.

My opinion is that he is a man who will make his way in the world. At the least he belongs to the class

to whom we begin to give the title *strong men*. He possesses, besides, in a high degree the courage of sacrifice. For success he will sacrifice the dearest interests — of others. You will succeed, young sir, or I am mistaken. But I do not envy you. Away with you!

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Let us now occupy ourselves with the multitude — alas! imposing — who swarm about the doors of the various callings and demand simply to be placed. They are told that to secure a place it is necessary to work, — and to keep at it; and they set to work and keep at it if necessary. They make a distinction between what is of use to them and what is not. Let us lose no time; time is money. Their world is not Creation; it is a programme. That the infinite should perplex any one appears to them contrary to nature; their curiosity causes them no disturbance. Theirs is no wild ambition; they ask nothing better than to see all the world succeed *ex æquo*, — every one must live. It is utilitarianism filtered through the realms of trade and commerce into that of the office.

This point of view is no less wretched because it is that of a great number of young men who are not half bad; so I will declare myself always on the side of those, be they few in number, who have an ideal. Happily there are more of them than one would suppose.

Yes, we all agree that one must live. To live is the great thing. We are even so strongly of that opinion that we demand more than you, because we do not call

such a life as yours living. What! can the destiny of man be described as *learning a trade to gain his bread*? Shall we come into the world with a heart, an intelligence, a conscience, and shall we attack mathematics, history, medicine, Latin, theology, and I know not what else, for what, — food and clothing? Do you call that life? Is it for this that you sweat over algebra, retorts, texts, and archives; that you use the scalpel on the dead, and the microscope to discover the infinitely small; that you pass examinations in the dog days?

It would be better to sleep the eternal sleep in water, fire, or under the earth, no matter where, than to live such a life; for, positively, it is not worth the trouble. Man does not live by bread alone. He is not simply an office-holder, active or retired, or any other worker who gets a salary. He is that, without doubt, — he is even compelled to work in some fashion; but for real success it is necessary, first of all, that he should be a man. Woe to the society where each one's aspiration is for a livelihood only! It reduces life to inferior proportions, making of it a quarry of appetites or a commonplace formality. We must live; and if we would live as men, we must have as the first thing an aim, a love, a hate, — in short, an ideal. If you do not try to find this when you are young, you will never find it, and you will not know life. It is on this account that a higher anxiety should dominate the anxiety as to a career, not only in the duties where knowledge and the mind is concerned, but in everything. You are studying philosophy, history, the arts. Very good; be first

of all a man, and you will have the stuff of which philosophers, historians, and artists are made. You are thinking of becoming an engineer, a merchant, a farmer, a superintendent of works. Excellent, if you begin by being men. If you neglect that, you will be only miserable slaves or oppressors, according to circumstances.

Utilitarianism destroys man; it curtails all our conceptions of a practical life. For it there is neither sentiment, nor right, nor *noblesse*, nor beauty, nor holiness, — nothing, in short, of what is human; nothing but figures. That which is not worth money or cannot earn it is, as a rule, worthless. This is the most frightful error which can overtake a man; for that which is worth the most in human life is precisely that which cannot be bought nor sold. Therefore I consider utilitarianism in youth as a calamity. That so-called honest disposition of the staid and selfish *bourgeois* is worse than all the vices. A youth of the earth, earthy, Heaven preserve us from it! The beautiful name of youth is unfitting for it. Is not youth made up of all the enthusiasms and all the ardours which lead us to despise utilitarianism? To be attacked by it is to be a prey to senility, to enter into existence with a mark of decrepitude. As it is worse to be born blind than to become blind, since even the recollection of light is missing; so to begin one's days with utilitarianism is worse than to end them with it, for there remains at least a reflection of higher things from which one has been separated by the slow wear of life. The precocious utilitarian has no souvenirs. Consequently

to him everything is possible, even shame itself, provided it pays.

* * *

We come now to a field, little edifying but still of goodly size, and our train of thought leads us to consider that negative ideal which has laid hold of the great mass of our contemporaries and has only too greatly affected our youth. I speak of what I shall call *passive enjoyment*.

Seeking passive enjoyment is the result of the lowering of the desires, but it is also a result of the material comforts which progress has procured us. Civilization, while it increases man's power, diminishes his need of exertion, habituates him to ease, and makes him avoid hard labour. This result is doubtless inconsistent, since domination over nature is to be had only at the price of long and painful exertions. But these exertions on the part of some have brought corresponding ease to others. If it be true that this age has worked as no other, it is also true that it has produced an always increasing class of privileged beings, who work very little or not at all.

Stimulated by practical realism, which has gained a foothold everywhere, repose and freedom from the necessity of exertion have become the cherished dream of a host of men. An easy life, secure from shocks, the life of a man of means, — how many people have this ambition for themselves and their children! The result of it is a whole category of *jeunesse dorée*, accustomed to effeminate habits, enamoured of a sedentary life, and devoted to languors and idleness of body and

mind. Like all those who are accustomed to be served, this class of youth is impatient and especially irritable. There are none like those who do not work, to find that others do not work enough. Accustomed to the marvels of science and industry by which they live, without knowing the pains they have cost, this youth cannot wait. Everything must be done for it quickly; if possible, instantly. It has replaced juvenile impetuosity with the nervous discontent of a little old woman. Our accelerated methods, our way of forcing and outraging nature, have created fictitious habits. That time is needed for a tree to grow, seems to some a relic of the old barbarism that progress has suppressed. They would willingly set the pace of their whole life at that of express-trains, provided that in the train they had their dining and sleeping car. Thus is seen in our society a phenomenon often observed in families. Hard-working fathers have listless and even idle sons. It is a division of labour. The fathers work for the sons; the sons rest for the fathers.

* * *

This brings us very naturally to those young men whom I shall call *the Useless Class*. We meet them, especially, in easy or brilliant circumstances,—circumstances always pregnant with danger. It is so much more to their honour if they escape these perils by energy and labour. The example of many young rich men who are workers consoles us here for the melancholy spectacle their comrades offer. We will describe these idlers. They are very solemn. Their expression of

countenance and their dress—at the same time correct and careless—bespeak the *blasé* man. A look, like that of a pasha half asleep, indicates that the world past and present is for their behoof. Let us enter their apartment and borrow the description of Legouv  , — it is exact: “There is nothing to sit on or to sleep on. There are only reclining-chairs, rocking-chairs, chairs with cushions, broad divans with broad pillows, wadded curtains, a fireplace reinforced by hot air, a carpet thick as a fleece. And what implements for the toilet! Am I in the room of a princess in the *Quartier Breda* or of the son of a judge? Implements for the hands enough to make one think himself in front of a cutler’s window! Twenty flasks of different essences! A series of brushes as ingenious as complex! Some are concave, others convex. There are long ones and broad ones; there are hard ones and soft ones. All simplicity in the house has taken refuge in the father’s room, or perhaps in the daughter’s. The same studied elegance appears in the table. Truly, we did not disdain a good dinner in the old days, and knew how to enjoy a good bottle of wine, but we were not learned as to all its details. To-day young men are gourmands, delicate of taste and hard to please. They have made love of comfort into a dilettanteism. ‘Where is the harm?’ some one asks. The harm is that one cannot work in a reclining-chair. The harm is that one becomes a slave to a good carpet and rich food. The harm is that one hesitates to undertake a journey, rough but advantageous, because one cannot take with one all the appurtenances of one’s toilet. The harm is that

at last a man comes to sacrifice his conscience to his dear comfort, and that in all questions of marriage, of profession, of public life, — that is to say, all questions of the future, of dignity, of honour often, — comfort, the tyrant comfort, joins issue with the strictest duties, and comes off victorious because it calls itself by a name more powerful even than that of passion, the name of habit. Yes, habit, that pale companion of old age, that melancholy sister of folly, — habit rules many young men as love never ruled them. It causes a thousand just reproaches from father to son, resented in a thousand bitter replies; from it finally come a thousand endless discussions on that real battle-field of the family, the question of money."

And since what we have quoted brings us to the subject, let us note, in passing, a great law of the school of life, — that youth should know the value of money. The great misfortune of parental wealth — above all, when it has been made quickly or inherited, and does not rest on a basis of actual work — is that the children lose their respect for money. To respect money and, even when one has a great deal, not to spend it injudiciously, is no ordinary quality. It is one of the most complex of social qualities; for it supposes not only conscience, tact, in short, the feeling that possession is a social function, but it demands besides the wisdom of experience. To possess this quality we must, in a word, know how hard it is to make money, and what efforts it represents. He who does not know this despises it; or if he attaches any value to it, it is only for the pleasure it procures. I dwell on this point in the interest of a higher morality,

and not — Heaven help me! — to serve the selfishness of some parents to whom evil consists in spending money, and good in saving it, and who measure the morality of their children by their parsimony. Vice is expensive, that is the reason for avoiding it; virtue is cheap, it must be cultivated; thus they cultivate only avarice, the most sordid of all the vices. But let us return to the useless class and not leave them. It is not at all necessary to belong to the privileged class to be of the stuff of which the useless are made.

This life of royal idleness has so many attractions that some who are not able to lead it in luxury lead it though they have but a competence, or are even in poverty. And this is what these artificial parasites want, — to lie down in life, as a log lies on the water; to float at the caprice of the wave, to advance, recede, rise, and fall, according to the accident of the moment; provided that they do this alone. In the midst of the conflicting influences that move society, amidst the labours, the studies, the sufferings of others, they possess the serene indifference of those who are fed, clothed, amused, and thankless to boot; they allow themselves to be drawn to-day by interest, to-morrow by passion, anger, hate, or fear, — again by sensuality and the coarser appetites; at times, for the sake of agreeable change, they allow themselves to feel the charm of virtue, to be lifted to the heights of inspiration in the intervals between their wallowings in the mire. A noble life this! When we attack these passive creatures and exhort them to regain their manhood, we must expect to be received with pity. The best that one can hope

on the most favourable occasion is to have them answer, "What will you have? I was made so, — I cannot help it." Perhaps, if they think you worth the exertion, they will quote the words of Montaigne, "I do no harm! I use only my own. If I am a fool, it is at my own expense and is no one's business, for my folly dies with me and has no successor." But if the occasion is not favourable, have a care. They will become furious, like a beast disturbed in his rest or his fits of passion. To have his ways of life upset, how can he bear it? If there is a contemptible act in the world, it is to worry people who without trying to injure any one let themselves glide gently down the hill of life. But I am taking a great deal of trouble for a class who give themselves so little.

* * *

And yet my heart cries "Beware" to many who without being useless let themselves fall into an easy life. It is like being caught by a machine from which you barely escape alive. An easy life begets cowardice. Cowardice begets lies and double dealing. Expedients must be resorted to, and direct ways be abandoned. Once entered on this life, the most clear-sighted is lost.

In particular, the passion for play must be specified as one of the saddest snares that our youth fall into. It gambles much too often. It is one of the diseases of the times, one of the forms of its restlessness. All classes of society bet on the races, and play among themselves, sometimes for large stakes, sometimes for small. To increase one's goods or one's gains by a stroke of chance, or even, in extreme cases, to demand

of chance that it will support one without work, is too often attempted. How many people fall asleep at night, uttering the name of the horse on which they have bet! Not so outwardly objectionable as drunkenness or debauchery, play is one of the most subtle forms of immorality. It makes one of a whole group of phenomena, and may perhaps be considered as a symptom of profound psychological trouble. A man who plays loses his hold on reality. The simple and laborious sequence of events escapes him. He is merely an adventurer. Like the people of the year one thousand, he expects that the touch of a wand will transform the world. Why then should he work? Soon, Fortune will come of herself. While waiting, he will borrow or take. Play, in truth, makes a man lose his head, and renders possible acts which without it would have been impossible. Thereafter he floats with the current. Am I not right in crying, "Beware!"

I may add that play kills conversation, one of the great charms and great needs of youth. It is an "isolator." It is a juggler in whose hands the world of men and things disappears.

In one of the most beautiful spots in Switzerland, where one can but regret the short time one has for admiration, I came upon two young tourists. They were about half-way up a most delightful mountain, and appeared to be resting. As I saw them from a distance, seated with their backs to the landscape, I could not account for it; but as I came near, all was plain, — they were playing cards. Four hours later, as I returned, I found them in the same place, still

playing. Night was falling; returning to the hotel, they finished their game there.

There is still an important subject, — important always and everywhere, but more serious in the case of youth than in that of their elders. I refer to love. It is through it that the general state of society can best be seen, and the qualities and defects of its conception of life. *Tell me how you love and I will tell you who you are.* The character of an epoch is measured by the respect with which it surrounds love. The criterion of a man's character is not his creed, religious, intellectual, or moral; it is the degree of respect he has for woman. When he loses faith and hope, he undervalues life. If he seize upon it as the one thing certain, which he must make use of quickly, he will belittle it by that very act; and his stunted conception of the world and man, the absence of the ideal, of true poetry, of energy, — all these will find an echo in his way of loving as an eloquent and direct commentary. Love is surely immortal, and will always be reborn from its ashes. Though dragged in the mud, a day will come when it will rise younger and more beautiful than ever. But it is no less true that individually we can destroy in us its freshness. What then is our position as to love? How does our youth love, how does it speak of love, how does it sing of it?

Alas, it can easily be shown that on this subject our youth is extremely reserved. We touch now a painful spot. Distrust, scepticism, and domestic shipwreck are everywhere. It is the fashion for youth to discuss

love like the most disillusioned of men. It would seem as if it were among the good old things that have disappeared, and that we have come too late into a world too old to experience it again.

As a general rule, what is lacking is respect for woman, — that cult of woman I might call it, which is the sign of vital integrity. She is no longer considered, as in certain ~~ascetic~~ epochs, a being impure and hurtful, whose presence we should fly. On the contrary, she is thought desirable, but at the same time *bizarre*, and, in the long run, in the way. She is a means of pleasure, provided we do not have to share her society and that we avoid any ties. The chains of love are replaced to advantage by free love. In short, what we fluently call love resembles true love no more than the constellation of the bear resembles the animal of that name.

ascetic

When real love exists, and it can never die, it prefers to conceal itself. It is therefore rare to meet love-songs composed by men still young, and still more rare to have this kind of poetry sung in society.

We no longer hear the old love-songs of our national *repertoire*. Instead, the loves of the vulgar herd are sung and resung to satiety. The Venus of the gods is less praised than her inferior namesakes. It is impossible for me to refrain from saying here what I think of these ditties of the times. But my remarks do not apply to any author in particular. It is the class of songs I have in mind, the way they come to notice, and those who sing them over and over until an outsider would imagine that there are no others.

I find, then, in the songs most in vogue at the moment, especially where love is the subject, an after-taste of senile libertinism. This savours of decadence and mental derangement; and when this same note is continued through song after song, and again in similar productions is re-echoed everywhere, it becomes fearfully tiresome. Far be it from me to reproach this kind of literature with its immorality. My intentions must not be misunderstood. Perhaps some one will accuse me of being splenetic, a kill-joy, a dried-up philosopher, thus assuming for himself the beautiful *rôle* of one who demands for youth the right to amuse itself. I myself demand that right and proclaim it. Provided the company be such that one can sit in it with self-respect, no one shall sing more lustily than I, *Gaudeamus igitur*; and when we come to the famous *pereat* couplet, where the jovial uproar is apt to arouse the neighbours, I will shout with all my might, *pereat diabolus . . . atque irrisores*. I will think at the same time of what really kills joy, — the deadly mirth which consumes in its fire all that should be sacred, — that spirit of scoffing, in short, which makes too often the burden of these songs. What! in these days and in this land, when the youth of a great nation meets and wishes to sing of love, shall these be the songs that are chosen to the exclusion of nearly all else? No; you slander yourselves! You cherish better things than these. It cannot be that you lack what is lacking in all these productions, — poetry, genuineness, freshness, youth.

But I must make haste to say that youth is little to blame for the state of things which truth obliges us to

picture in such sombre colours. We have left nothing undone to bring it to this state. Existing society has grave faults with which to reproach itself. How shall we speak of the flippancy with which in the family and in public love, chastity, and marriage are talked about, especially to the young? It would seem as if their ears had been made expressly to listen to jests and doubtful witticisms. They are given the most pernicious advice in all that concerns respect for woman and for themselves, as if all the wisdom of the ages on this point — so dearly acquired and embodied in two or three rules not to be violated with impunity — was only puerile. The consequences are apparent. In the domain of love our youth has suffered grievous wrong. Its predecessors have left it a baleful heritage of manners and literature. This last in especial has passed through all degrees of moral laxity till it has reached unbridled license. "Under the pretext of art and truth to nature, the crudest licentiousness is set forth in books for young people."¹ But books have been outdone. Pamphlets and broadsides bid against one another in exciting curiosity. How can youth be exposed to such influences without the greatest danger? Even the schoolboy is contaminated. When the passions first awake in him, he need not seek immoral literature. It comes in the way even of him who does not look for it. What kind of a future is this preparing for us? Is it not time to rise in the defence of childhood, the family, love, youth, the springs of life, and to hold out a hand to that valiant society for the uplifting of public

¹ Jules Lemaitre, *Débats*, 16 mars, 1891.

morality which, after having long preached in the desert, begins to convince the least clear-sighted of its usefulness?

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All that we have said has been to show how example, and the habits with which it is surrounded, influence youth in the practical orientation of its conduct, and exercise on it a pressure as strong and often stronger than precepts and teaching. We have as yet looked at the question on its negative side only. But its positive side is vast. Withdrawn within the sacred grove of the muses, in the perfect calm of meditation and research, youth runs the risk of becoming isolated, and of losing interest in life. It is right that it should hear its echoes, and that the great voice of a struggling and suffering humanity should reach it. The best corrective of theories is always a practical life. If it be full of dangers, of evil temptations, of pitfalls, it is full also of austere instruction and healthful admonition. Life has, too, the great advantage over theories and books, that it is less given to cross purposes and subtleties. It is real. It is not a little white or a little black, according to the fleeting interpretation of a fantasy or a calculation; it is graven in the rock of reality; it gnashes its teeth, cries, howls, and sings: there is blood in it, and tears, and joy, and it is likely that he who witnesses it will remember it.

Never, perhaps, has this truth been better verified than during the last twenty years. All the world knows the condition of our literature and of our internal politics. The latter has done, by certain deplorable excesses, for

the nation nearly what the former has done for the principles of thought and life. Party spirit is as injurious to a country as undue analysis is to moral and intellectual vitality.

The great danger of these strifes between compatriots, and of that spirit of calumny and detraction which has poisoned our public life, is that they produce a youth sceptical on the subject of patriotism. How has this danger been averted? In the first place, because sickening sights repel rather than attract, and because the follies of our predecessors often make us thoughtful. Evil, at a certain point, rouses the most reserved, and makes them shake off their indifference; for example, the wretched Boulangist performance which roused the whole student world. In the next place, because life corrects life, and because, though the politicians have their place noisily and broadly defined, there is something beside,—it is the great and silent national industry. Side by side with what fills the papers, and an unwholesome publicity magnifies and announces to the whole world, are the fruitful labours of which little is said, but which are eloquent in themselves.

The children of this land of France have not seen their country raise itself slowly during twenty years by continuous efforts and persevering work, without perceiving in themselves the results of such an example. Nothing is finer than to see life fighting its enemies. The weakest being who repairs his losses and renews his courage is interesting. The ants who rebuild their house which the passing foot has destroyed, even the tree,

torn by the storm, which sends out fresh limbs, touches us and wins our sympathy. Still more does the man who, struck down, picks himself up, the vanquished nation which binds up its wounds, remakes its finances, its army, its schools, its commerce, its industries. While the negations of a materialistic science and the theories of writers lay before us the weakness of the human will, a whole people at work gives to these unhealthy theories a universal lie. While the politicians in their useless struggles discredit liberty itself, democratic France brings to its growing institutions, to the modern spirit in its entirety, the magnificent evidence of its patient resurrection. The heart of youth is magnanimous. It could not remain insensible to these real proofs. Out of the depths of the national life has come to it a great life-giving wind, which has swept away the miasma of theories, and the diseases whose seeds had been sown by literature.

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Finally, life has laid hold of youth in a fashion more direct still through its contribution to the national defence. I consider that the profession of arms is most salutary, and is of the greatest use to youth in a thousand ways. There are indeed many things learned in this great school which have become rare. Obedience, in the first place, — an invaluable thing, which is not met everywhere, and which is indispensable in a democracy, because it is the mother of all liberty.

Equality next, which is talked about so fluently, but is so difficult to practise. Then exercise, — exercise of the will, and physical exercise. A little discomfort is an

excellent remedy for effeminate tendencies. There is a whole world of philosophy in the long marches, knapsack on back, and at the bottom of the mess-platter. If you are not convinced, look at those who return from service. What a clear eye they have, what a bronzed skin, what sleep, and what an appetite! All the diletanti, all the useless, should be sent to the school of war. These virile exercises would open to them horizons hitherto unknown. I will say no more on this subject, or I shall get no further. Down with militarism! long life to the soldier! The true soldier is one of the most beautiful figures which humanity has produced. And whoever loves anything must be a little of a soldier, whether he will or no. He must have a heart in his body and a sword in his hand.

I will only mention in passing, as I shall return to it later on, the salutary influence which social questions begin to exercise on students among the younger generation. Nowhere more than here can they find wholesome diversion and austere lessons that will rouse utilitarians, men without nerve, and those whose minds are turned exclusively to theorizing.

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Thus it is that life, with its necessities and its examples good or bad, acts on youth, discouraging it or encouraging it in turn. And this which is true of the great world is true also of that microcosm called the family. There also those who seek their way are constantly at school. Unhappily, how many are the wounds, how serious the wear and tear and the uncertainties in those intimacies where outside influences and the individual

tendencies which result from them, all have their echo! The family is in a state of tension, and the children show it. An artificial life, a lack of authority on one hand, of respect on the other, strained relations between man and wife whose orientation is so different, loosening of marital ties, lowering of domestic habits, the inroads of outside life and even that of the street and gutter in education, — the good is there, no doubt; but the evil is so great, so pervasive. With its ignorance of life and its need to be guided aright, how can youth discern its road among so many dangers! It is not surprising that it often goes astray. The fault lies, above all, in the situation; and we shall have to correct many irregularities before we realize toward new-comers in life the desideratum contained in the precept *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia*.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHEEP OF PANURGE.

IN all movements, at the heels of the leaders are a crowd who go whither they are urged, — men without purpose, who follow one current or another as it may chance, without understanding what is taking place. The spirit of imitation and that of inertia are important factors in the world, — above all, in the world of youth. "The bulk of every generation is impressionable; the greater number, always and everywhere, are simply a flock of sheep." This tendency to follow beaten roads is rather accentuated than diminished, in our day. Among the vulgar errors which fill our heads and which pass for absolute truths, is the assumption that the past is characterized by immobility, rigidity, and poverty of forms, by the absence of the critical spirit, and by monotony of thought and habit. We, on the contrary, are full of diversity, movement, and inquiry. Nothing is more false. Those ancient epochs, which seem to us so markedly stable, had none the less within their framework of stability a marvellous richness of forms, habits, customs, and local originality.

¹ Lavis: "La génération de 1890," *Bulletin de l'Association générale des étudiants*, mai, 1890.

They possessed variety in uniformity. We, on the contrary, possess monotony in change. The more change there is, the greater the monotony. The thousand forms in which life and thought show themselves spread and take root rapidly. The crowd accepts them without discernment.

One of the peculiarities of this age of disillusion and lack of belief is infatuation. An idea comes to life spontaneously; it grows, spreads, and carries away the masses. None so credulous as those who have renounced all belief. Their need of belief, always under repression, turns suddenly to objects which chance and caprice alone determine, and which are destined to be some day abandoned just as they have been adopted, — without apparent reason.

Everything in this century so rich in invention has contributed to produce uniformity. Knowledge has allowed us, even, to multiply to infinity a single design, and to throw it on the world in such a quantity as to make it common. The passion for vulgarizing has seized the arts. Does a *chef d'œuvre* somewhere come to light, it is instantly copied in thousands of impressions, and is seen everywhere so constantly that at the end of a few months one is tired of it. The history of the most beautiful airs of the operas is the same, — they have come down to the hand-organs. For six weeks a melody captivates the public, all the world sings and whistles it; after that it is the turn of another. It is the same with the greater part of the manifestations of art or the social life.

The great city, with all the machinery of modern civi-

lization, has inundated the country with its products, and carries on everywhere an unequal contest with special localities. By centralization we have suppressed not only all that was unwholesome or narrow in individual work, we have suppressed also its strength and vigour. Those great levellers — industrialism, bureaucracy, and fashion — have passed over the world and crushed out originality. Life and man have been reduced to the same level. Local habits, dress, songs, and provincial idioms have disappeared. Now, though one travel far, one finds the railway-lines, the stations, the hotels, and the theatres as alike as two brothers. The country districts, enfeebled, deserted, and discouraged, present to the great cities their own image reduced and stunted.

Much might be said on this subject, but the point I wish to make is this: Where can ability, originality, and the desire to strike out into new paths find a place in a world so constituted? How, think you, can youth have any individual character? Note well, that it is almost a heresy to differ from every one else. A fear of seeming peculiar shows itself already in dress. No one follows the fashion so closely as some young men. They must have the same hat, the same cravat, the same cut of coat, etc. Individuals no longer pass us in the streets, but samples, as they say in trade, by the dozen and the gross; and, in truth, it gives a vague impression of a factory and of fancy goods to see so many creatures exactly identical everywhere. The monocle, the cane, the gestures, the stereotyped phrases suggest an automaton. It would not be astonishing to find on them

the stamp of a manufacturer or a signature, — as, for example, *Grévin fecit*.

Manners conform to the same rule as dress, and ideas follow suit. Gradually a rut is made which constantly grows deeper. The crowd fall into it one after the other. There is but one form of expression in the world of thought. Soon the life of the flock of sheep becomes the chosen one. If they go outside of it, they are like fish out of water. They lose the run of affairs and their judgment. They no longer attach a value except to that which they have seen, heard, and tasted with the crowd. "It was wretched, — there was no one there; it was superb, — a perfect crush." Acknowledge that this is a serious and grievous state of things, from the point of view of the future. The school should be a remedy. Where more than there should independence be taught and valued? But the school has felt these surrounding influences. Monsieur Lavissee shall speak: "Our inferiority is perhaps the result of the error into which we have fallen, that of uniform instruction. We have multiplied colleges; we have placed them under the same discipline; we have regulated the disposition of time, minute by minute; we have written, article by article, courses of study without end. Finally, that no one may escape our rules, and that no individuality may be permitted to any one, no matter who, we have established at the entrance to all the avenues of intellectual life examinations which bar out all independent thinkers. Our liberty of instruction has nothing in common with intellectual liberty. It is reduced to the choice of a

master, the option being between a civilian and an ecclesiastic.

"The hold of the school on the mind is one of the phenomena of our century. We ought to do the work we do in the schools, and we may pride ourselves on having done it; but beware. Scholastic culture, as we understand it to-day, is dangerous. Its pretensions to be encyclopædic are a snare. It wishes to include everything, and for that very reason it is limited. The scholar who tries to learn everything learns little; the mind which is surfeited loses its appetite; a uniformity of rules absolutely chokes off all originality."

To become somebody under such conditions, one must have a heart of brass and a head of adamant. France has sometimes been reproached for not having developed the spirit of colonization. This spirit is really that of a powerful personal initiative. To leave familiar surroundings demands courage. It demands as much courage to become a pioneer in the domain of the mind, of habit, of action; to separate from the great majority and take one's own way in pursuit of a new ideal. What ardent sympathy ought we not to have for every attempt of youth to free itself from the slavish burden of routine! Our greatest hope of being drawn from the rut where we are lies in the young men, few indeed in number, who have had the courage to live as colonists and explorers, and to escape from the flock, shepherded, watched, and sheared, — that they might create for themselves in communion with minds of their own kind a refuge for times of trouble.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW WORDS ON PARTY SPIRIT.

DURING our progress thus far, we have encountered party spirit several times. It deserves a page to itself, for the same reason that one describes at length the shape, habits, and depredations of certain noxious animals.

In the modest influence which man has over his own life, one of the best rules he can follow is this: to take things as they are and try to get the greatest possible good from them. A man imbued with party spirit practises this rule inversely, and so succeeds in getting evil even out of good. He exaggerates his adversary's faults, and disparages his merits. His evil intention neutralizes the good he might otherwise gain.

The incurable idiosyncrasy of party spirit is its opposition to the great human law of solidarity. It creates a humanity within a humanity, draws around this elect few a well-defined line, intrenches and barricades itself within, and allows to be seen from without only thick walls, bristling with arms. Henceforth abstract interest, justice, and right no longer exist. In their place are party interests, party justice, etc. All that the party and its supporters do is right. Let others do precisely the same, if they are outside the fold, it is wrong. "What is a

noxious plant? Every plant that does not grow in our own garden. But your neighbour cultivates precisely the same plant as you. Impossible. If he does, he is a counterfeiter. We alone are the salt of the earth." Such is party spirit. The best horse if he will not harness to their chariot is but a donkey. The gold of others is false; their virtues are glittering vices; their beliefs imposture. They have something else to think of than separating the good from the bad in an adversary's action. To suppose him capable of any good whatever is, in a way, to go over to the enemy.

It is not one of the least significant signs of the times that this pernicious spirit develops side by side with scepticism. It is often the cloak which the latter assumes. To hide the void within, it shelters itself behind an imposing front. The fragile reed of a worn and worm-eaten conviction is painted to represent iron. Thus the greatest infidels, scoffers, revilers, — in short, all men who are without that elementary basis of all conviction, respect, — have shown themselves in our day uncompromising partisans. And this is certainly logical. It is rare that he who has followed toward the truth the humble path of personal experience, ceases to keep in that path. Nay, he goes forward, thinking whether he may not get light even from an adversary. But he who is nothing and believes nothing, neither divine nor human, who is dead, in short, to the truth, has everything to gain in assuming the impassible attitude of party spirit. Its rigidity, which is only that of a corpse, gives the impression of firmness.

Here, without doubt, is one of the great reasons why

party spirit has in our day infested politics, religion, and science itself. It has worked wonders. Thanks to it, for instance, on certain days of defeat men prone on the earth with their backs broken have sung victory in the press, declaring themselves stronger than ever, and burying their opponents—on paper. Thanks to it, fanatics—religious, so called—declare questionable, acts of self-devotion which are not inspired by a sentiment like their own; and *vice versa* the fanatics of unbelief accuse as hypocritical the slightest evidences of a disinterested spirit in which religion has had a part. It is this same spirit which dreams, in time of public tranquillity, of disorder and anarchy, because of devotion to overthrown dynasties; or which makes some declare that monarchical France knew only terror, rapine, and tyranny. One man states, *ex cathedra*, "For three centuries history is one vast assault on the truth." Another counts the days and years from the Revolution; all that went before is null and void.

What a beautiful school for youth is this over which such a master presides, and under whose *régime* one can say truthfully, "I know that I live in a time of intolerance, where I can expect nothing from those who do not think exactly as I do."¹

That this scowling, surly spirit, which is forgetful of all that brings men together, and mindful only of what divides them, should appear to some extent in shipwrecked lives; that it should lay hold on men of mature years; that it should harden the hearts of the old, rousing the passions and destroying the pleasures and the fruits

¹ Edgar Quinet : *L'esprit nouveau*.

of life, is sad. But it is a deformity which seems more natural to those whom life has maltreated. It is a different thing to meet this same deformity in the young; there it is hideous. A young man bitten by party spirit is a being incomparably odious; for to assume the turn of mind and the appearance of a partisan,—his crabbed and unreasonable air,—it is necessary to suppress deliberately all native kindliness, all wholesome curiosity, and all good impulses. Men who train animals are sometimes very cruel to the poor beasts. They dig out nightingales' eyes to make them sing better, and cut dogs' ears to make them look more fierce. Poor beasts! wicked men! But what shall we say of those who treat youth thus, or of the youth which inflicts such mutilation on itself?

Nevertheless, party spirit is one of the most powerful influences at the time when man takes his bearings and chooses his path in life. The timidity of youth, its ignorance, its inertia, all predestine it to fall a prey. Its impressionable nature, and its resemblance to a flock of sheep, of which we have spoken, furnish exactly the characteristics desired by the moulders of the profession. It can be hardened and manipulated at will. Woe to the young men who undergo these influences and know not how to defend themselves. They are for years, perhaps forever, reduced to slavery, unless, worse still, they become themselves fanatics. What a wonderful product the world is then called to contemplate! The most in earnest in that case are the neophytes. Their zeal is the delight of their spiritual fathers. They were fierce; the neophytes are filled with fury. The less they

know of men and their reasons for action, the more easily can they abuse, judge, and condemn them. It is a contest as to which shall use the more violent language, and attack with the lesser shame irreproachable adversaries. Such a youth is incapable of learning anything. It enters life through the little low door of prejudice, shuts itself in, narrows down feeling and thought more and more each day, and finally becomes deaf and blind even to evidence.

Happily here the excess of evil, even, is sometimes a good. Party spirit has set afloat so many scandals, has neutralized so many honest and courageous efforts, that it is discredited. I foresee a youth who for its better protection has chosen this watchword, — Party spirit is an enemy.

CHAPTER VII.

HEALTH AND AMUSEMENTS.

THERE have been long periods in history when men developed themselves physically at the expense of development in other directions, and lived as if they had no minds. There have been times, too, when they lived as if they had no bodies. In one way it might be said that our age has acted as if it had neither the one nor the other. Materialistic science, which denies mind, claims to have closed forever a host of well-springs whence the soul drew new vigour and strength. Then, too, we have for a long time neglected physical education. Knowledge is the one thing needful for man. To acquire it, everything else must be sacrificed. We have produced, as a consequence, cerebral hypertrophy, abnormal intelligences, and bundles of nerves. Existing civilization, too, with its feverish haste, the multitude of sensations which it imparts to us, the emotions which it continually excites, and the refinements of pleasure which it procures, has had a fatal influence on our nervous system. Life, such as it has now become, exasperates the sensibilities, strains the nerves to the utmost, breaks down energy, and weakens the blood. Our food itself helps to produce this result. Rich food and strong drink are everywhere in demand. One of the

contradictions of our age, whose contradictions are so numerous that they cannot be specified; is that while it has conquered Nature and the natural sciences it has carried man farther from Nature than ever. An artificial life has been developed. Our means of transportation and traffic have congregated in the great urban centres the life which was scattered over large districts. The large cities have absorbed the most genuine intelligence and energy of all nations. France has rushed into this extreme phase of centralization with rare impetuosity. A state of plethora, of congestion, has little by little declared itself in the great centres. The mountains, the forests, the fields, on the other hand, are depopulated. A constantly increasing number of men have consummated the divorce, — the most fatal which can be consummated, — the divorce of man from Nature, from the soil.

What are the usual environments of our studious youth, come from where it may? They are nearly always the artificial and enervating life of great cities. Nature is far away, beyond the pavements, the chimneys, and the walls. It is impossible, with the best intentions in the world, that physical health should not suffer. Every one knows that a great city devours young children. It consumes a frightful total of lives and energies, and, left to itself, would soon become depopulated. Nothing could be worse for youth from the point of view of hygiene. Everything is sedentary, pleasure and study alike, and everything is carried to excess. The double load of unwholesome amusements and undue study quickly affects the most robust health.

Indoor life, late hours, bad air, all the accessories of a *somnambulistic* life, subject the physique to a strain, and sooner or later have to be paid for. But the saddest result of this artificial life, ruinous alike to the brain and the nervous system, has been the almost total suppression of the only thing capable of restoring the lost equilibrium, — physical exercise and manual labour. For years these two have been more and more neglected. A sort of foolish contempt for them exists. Physical exercise, in the shape of some excellent sports, has begun to find favour these latter days. Manual labour, especially the tillage of the soil, — the most healthful and the most normal of all, — has always been out of favour. Youth has reaped to-day what its predecessors sowed. Each new generation shows more striking signs of weakness. Already many are calling attention to the danger, and they begin to be listened to. But it is hard to recover lost ground. How fight at one and the same time against hereditary tastes and the difficulties of the situation? The evil is evident, the remedy less so. In short, our whole youth suffers the results of an artificial and abnormal life.

It is even easy now to find young men who have a distressing impression of life, and who cling to it only indifferently, though at the same time they do not wish to undergo suffering or to die. I am not speaking of those *blasé* youths who have exhausted the entire round of pleasures, as others have that of the emotions and the intellect, and who have become sceptical as to pleasure as these to philosophy. I am speaking of those sensitive and morbid souls for whom even

the daily round of our nervous life has become painful, and resembles its normal state no more than the deep full note of a fine bell resembles the irritating jingling of an electric annunciator. In such a state cheerfulness and mirth, those sacred treasures of youth, are but a cause of suffering. It reaches insensibly a point where it cannot be amused. The cause of this is largely the class of pleasures we select. Nearly all our amusements stimulate the nerves instead of quieting them. Amusement is excitement. This forced pleasure is artificial and very exhausting. Instead of leading you to taste the good things of life, and that sweet intoxication which makes healthful and vigorous youth hear "the welkin ring and the stars sing together," it disposes you rather by forced reaction to perceive the bitter dregs at the bottom of the cup. Oh! I know perfectly that here and there real pleasures still exist, and I rejoice at it. Pleasures will always exist while there are sunshine, flowers, and fresh-hearted young companions. But on the whole they have diminished, and my ears ring with the cry, "We don't know how to amuse ourselves."

It is high time that these symptoms be considered seriously. In my opinion, health and amusement are as necessary parts of cultivation in life as any branch of knowledge, no matter what it is. But I will return to this subject.

Alas! how shall we refrain from thinking that with many the evil is incurable? Let me at least drop a sympathetic tear over the many poor lost young lives, victims of psychological anomalies, faded before their

time, and over that youth destined to fall from the tree of life like unsound fruit. Melancholy harvest from so many seeds of errors and vices! They are to be pitied. They pay a debt which they never contracted. They may be called the century's children of sorrow. But woe to us, if the pity which they inspire does not awaken in our hearts a hatred for all that has caused their martyrdom!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YOUTH OF THE PEOPLE.

THE life of the people is one of the good things of which we know nothing. What appears on the surface is a small or poor indication of what goes on within. Nevertheless, this life should be widely studied because of the good there is in it, and because of the evils from which it suffers. Each of these is reflected in its youth. Its lot in life is essentially different from that of studious youth. It has neither the leisure nor the culture necessary to inform itself of the world of ideas and theories. The struggle for bread, the hard exactions of labour constantly distract it, and do not permit of indulgence or self-examination. Analysis of ideas and impressions is a thing unknown. After a few short years at a primary school, the workshop, the factory, the office, or the fields, and above all, the example of those above it, and the cheap press are its school.

Notwithstanding the tender age at which the children of the people enter school, and the short time they attend, its influence cannot be over-estimated. Its comprehensiveness and the number of people to whom it appeals make it a great power. The attention we have bestowed on our public schools will be one of our merits in the eyes of posterity. The primary school is

par excellence the instrument of national education. I expect to return to this subject later on. For the moment I will mention it only as one of those factors which influence the youth of the people and its ideas. Every one knows how lasting are the impressions of infancy. They are still more lasting among the people than among the cultivated class, where reading, successive schools, and various influences interfere with and sometimes efface them.

The churches are another factor. A goodly number of youth, it is true, escape this influence, especially in the great centres; but it incontestably affects a multitude. How long will it last? To what degree it is trammelled by indifference and suppressed by antipathy, it is difficult to say exactly. But though the mass of the people do not escape contact with religion, it is not necessarily religious. It is infinitely less so than heretofore. The increased observance of certain outward forms, encouraged and abetted with a purpose often foreign to religion, should not deceive us on this point. The people have conceived a distrust of religion. Its supernatural character removes it from their sphere, and to it they attribute certain reservations on social and political subjects. Consciously or unconsciously, many ask themselves if the church is not on the side of the powers of the earth and the prosperous middle class against the weak. That the would-be movement for reform should have begun in contemporaneous society with the aristocracy, and thence passed to the middle classes in its attempts to reach the people, is a strong indication of this.

Whatever it may be, the practical orientation of the youth of the people begins too soon. It is made during those years of apprenticeship which are the schools of the masses. The difference in occupations is very great. To be in the workshop is quite another thing from being a clerk or a farm labourer.

The years of apprenticeship of a young mechanic are very hard. What is a child of that age, to be given over by himself to that formidable combination of men and machinery which our great industries are? He is so small, so weak; and the forces, the personal influences, the material interests about him are so great. In that mighty workroom where the looms whirl with such deafening noise, where the most careful attention is necessary to avoid accidents, and where every faculty is concentrated on the execution of three or four movements, the child insensibly feels himself a wheel among wheels. He turns into a machine, because the machine cannot become human. And when he sees that great engine which turns the shaft and the belting that make the looms move under his eyes,—that precious engine shut up in a house of its own, watched over and cared for, and terrible above all for its strength and its risks,—how small does the child feel beside this fire-devouring monster of iron that often grinds to pieces those who feed it!

How poorly cared for he feels beside these glistening machines which lack nothing and which cost so dear! What is he in comparison with them and the wealth whose instrument they are?

Then there are the encounters with those in authority,

the brusque elbowings-aside, the curt orders, the coarse talk, full of all kinds of good and evil, the concise and pitiless insight into men and things,—all of which puzzle young heads, and make an agglomeration so difficult for them to judge aright. The nature of our modern industry, its development, its colossal factories and foundries, its great stock companies, the gradual drawing apart of master and man who were often co-labourers,—all this renders the position of the youth of the workshops as difficult as it is interesting.

Youth in clerical positions has a much easier life. It also belongs to the people, and from the nature of its duties pertains to that ever-increasing class of intermediaries between an idea and its material execution, between capital and labour, and between the master and the man, which our form of society has made necessary. Like all intermediaries they share the qualities and shortcomings of those above and below them. The most serious hardship of these young *employés* is their sedentary life,—which is almost that of a cell bounded by a chair and the corner of a table,—and the confining nature of their work. Their duties are so subdivided that each has only some one subdivision, and works in a round like a horse in a riding-school. This destroys the mind. The effect on the body is equally bad.

In these two respects the agriculturist fares better. His work changes with the seasons, he is in touch with Nature; and although occupied with manual labour, he must think more, because of what is ever before his eyes, and because his changing occupations demand it. Thus, though artistic work has nearly all disappeared

from manufactures under the terrible pressure of economic competition, and the most capable artists have been reduced, little by little, to machines, the young agriculturist is still in his normal condition. His is no cramped life; he lays his hand on the whole grand work of creation,—nay, more, he is surrounded by things beyond the calculation and foresight of man. Fast though he, too, may be in the meshes of the economic net, he does not see everywhere those fatal figures which are such a wretched standard of man and his works. His field has a money value, no doubt, but it is worth far more than that to him. He has the pleasure of seeing the crops grow and ripen, he has the memory of his father who tilled and cared for the same fields, and, in short, a multitude of associations such as give value to the veriest trifles. He is not lost in the crowd, he is somebody,—not a mere number, like the young apprentices in great factories, or even like young clerks. On the other hand, he feels from afar the increasing influence, the fascination of the great city. Here is his danger, for he risks losing that which is his mainstay,—the love for the soil, that deep and powerful sentiment, the source of energy and virtue.

This is the place to present certain general considerations on the intellectual and moral outfit of the youth of the people, and on its conception of life such as it appears to us in the present generation.

The lower classes, no matter where they are studied, are profoundly affected by the current realism. The two or three fundamental beliefs which have constituted for them during centuries the very basis of religion

and morality are shaken in some, destroyed in others. God, the soul, the hereafter, human liberty and responsibility,—those who have retained belief in these retain it greatly weakened. From the number who cling to them and prove it by outward observance, if we deduct those whom routine or interest influences, the contingent of believers that remains is small indeed. A greater material welfare has resulted to the people from the great scientific movement of the day, but with it have come greater needs, and the conviction that only what one can see or touch can be depended on. As a rule, youth between seventeen and twenty-five is distinguished by a development of the appetites and a decrease of the aspirations. It is a sad thing to say; but the better acquaintance I have made with this particular world, the more am I convinced of the immense void which has formed little by little in the soul of the people. There are days when what one hears and sees almost leads to the conclusion that there is no longer any belief. A half-dozen negative formulas, the condensed results of accumulated negations, make up the category of mystery and the infinite. The system of morality is in keeping with this philosophy; it is utilitarian in theory. How could it be otherwise? Do those who give the tone to society show any other than this in their acts? Have not the people daily under their eyes the sight of that morality of success which so disgraces us? Does it not see men and enterprises which are successful absolved from responsibility, even by those who make profession of morality and religion? As if that which triumphed were always good, and that which failed were

bad. Has it not evidence every time it opens its eyes that money dishonestly obtained, when there is plenty of it, is more honoured than honest money when there is little? That alone would be enough to make it conceive doubts of the religion and morality which is taught it. It drops your good advice and your principles, and borrows your vices. It is tempted to consider the first as an invention by clever people for the use of the simple-minded. The morality which counts is that which is practised, not that which is taught. The people are on the watch, and great breaches are made in their conscience whenever they on whom their eyes are fixed show by their acts that at bottom they are without principles. For, make no mistake, there are always the leading classes. Much has been said in our day of their disappearance. It is claimed that they have died out for lack of successors; that they lost their influence through their own fault, or through pressure from the spirit of equality. There is truth in all this. But it is also true that that which gave the old leading classes their dangerous prerogative—namely, moral ascendancy and the power of example—can never die. Its watchword is one of those urgent social needs that always exist, and comes necessarily from the lettered and opulent few. They who are prominent because of learning or fortune are looked up to. The popular mind differs from that of the educated classes, in that it holds more strongly to men than to ideas, to deeds and facts than to sentiments. Shades of meaning and distinctions escape it. It is hard to gain its attention, but once gained it is in earnest. It informs itself, then, *en bloc*, and pronounces

summary judgments which it cannot be persuaded to change.

This state of things can be more easily noticed in the youth of the people than elsewhere. Yet despite all this, the utilitarianism of which we have spoken is not at ease in its surroundings. This system of morality is contradicted every day in the lives of those who profess it. Among the people, more than elsewhere, under the imperious demands of existence, the weight of suffering or of common trouble, humanity awakes and performs unceasing and touching acts of solidarity and friendship. Unhappily they appear little on the surface. To find them we must lead the life of the people. The evil, on the contrary, is in plain sight.

I note, especially, in the world of this youth two things from which conclusions may properly be drawn; namely, their treatment of their parents when old, and their treatment of women. I regret to say that examples of cynicism in acts and words, of depravity of manners, and of contempt for women abound. Disrespect and ingratitude to parents, even when poverty does not mitigate the offence, are so common that at certain moments of depression one might declare that there was a complete moral decay. And here we may note toward both women and parents a lessening of respect everywhere.

A man's respect increases or decreases with his conception of his own dignity. The more a man is worth in his own eyes, the more willingly does he respect men or institutions which personify human nature and society. When he has lost faith in his higher

self, in his worth as a moral being, — in his soul, in short, — he loses the basis of respect. Nothing appears worthy of reverence. His view of the whole world is distorted by this mental lack. We are here face to face with a serious fact. Some accuse the modern spirit of having destroyed reverence by its equalizing tendencies. Let us look into it, because it is worth while to be sure of a thing.

No age has done more to destroy the pomp of state and custom, no age has gone so relentlessly to the bottom of glittering nullities. It has not been willing to accord respect except with full foreknowledge. Whoever is touched by the modern spirit, be he emperor or pope (and Heaven be praised, such things have happened!), seems at bottom convinced of this, — that nothing is great unless it is true. Men in hereditary positions of great power seek rather to commend themselves by justice, by care for the weak, by all that suggests that they are men like ourselves, than by any assertion of absolute authority. They claim to be the servants of the people rather than their masters. Another has worn this title before them. That other was Christ. It is, in truth, from him that this new conception of authority springs. What harm is there in this? Is respect thereby diminished? I declare, on the contrary, that a spirit such as this is the grandest, the most august in the world, since it teaches us to fear nothing and to respect nothing above that holy and immortal law which governs all; and to find greatness in our own souls, and in that helpful disposition which makes the highest, out of respect for life, become the lowliest

servitor. But this spirit, like all other good things, has its caricature; and that caricature is the spirit of depreciation. This does not consist in according respect only where it is due, and in proclaiming that only as great which is true; it consists in respecting nothing at all. Above all, it delights in vilifying and dragging in the mud all that is venerable and holy. It is not worth its while to unmask borrowed greatness and to search for truth in order to reverence it, — no, all greatness and all superiority irritate it. It is, in its very essence, subversive, irreligious, and worldly. It has transformed man's lack of fear and his contempt for artificial greatness, that noble trait of fine souls, into lack of piety, that characteristic of knaves.

The modern spirit leads to freedom; this other to the worst slavery. The man who respects nothing falls into the grasp of constraint and brute force.

Whence comes this lack of respect which afflicts our youth so sorely? It comes from the pernicious examples set by those in high places. It comes from corrupt instructors, — those professors of nothingness and earth, great and small, whose doctrines have filtered through thousands of crevices into the hearts of the masses. It comes from the retailers of scandals and calumniators by profession, who are urgent to discover a thief, an assassin, or at least a hypocrite in every man who is prominent from his position or his talent. There is a work more dangerous than to demolish the principles of the people, or to cast ridicule on holy and venerable things, or to sully its imagination with impure literature, — it is to destroy its belief in honesty, in

disinterestedness, in all virtue; and in this respect an enormous amount of disintegration has been accomplished. Personal influence has been increased to immeasurable proportions by the propaganda of the cheap press. There is no need of reading a bad book, or of being told of things in detail. An article in the newspaper, a line in a serial, a wretched caricature is enough to awaken a train of ideas, and to open the door into a world. There are certain low tendencies in human nature which welcome evil suggestions. They can always be counted on, when one wishes to corrupt and to coin money at the same time.

But this is not all. When reverence takes flight, confidence disappears also. The people to-day, and the youth of the people, distrust every one and everything, even those chance educators who have perverted their minds. There was a time not far back, when all that was printed, whether placard, proclamation, or newspaper, was read and believed in as gospel. We all feel the need of relying on something, and those who have the least light crave it more than others. Through this, which is in truth only one of the forms of faith in humanity and truth, and one of the evidences of rectitude, a vast measure of good can be accomplished. But confidence is killed by abuse. The people have been so often deceived that, for a large number, words and print have no value. This is scepticism, and in one of its worst forms. Youth has inherited this scepticism. The precious link between those who ought to teach and direct and those who have need to be taught is thus broken; and the great majority of youth, left to itself,

lives on without belief, principles, or confidence in man to guide it.

One of the consequences of this state of mind is a lack of cohesion, which shows itself in the direction of their most serious interests. It would, for instance, have been natural to see the youth of the people interested, as one man, in social questions. What we do see is rather the opposite of this. The majority do not interest themselves at all. A minority only is enthusiastic; but it is rare for even them to rise above questions of party or of material interest. There are but a chosen few who understand that discipline, *esprit de corps*, and sacrifice are the indispensable moral bases of all progress, even though economic. The social education of the youth of the people is in its rudimentary stage. Our educated youth can do yeoman service here, if the heart and the disposition are not lacking.

* * *

The great dark cloud on the horizon is alcoholism. Doubtless its influence is felt in all classes of society; but it is, above all, the scourge of the people. It is a scourge of recent date, one that has appeared in the last thirty or forty years. Alcoholism is the very latest *parvenu* and a cosmopolite. It can be assigned no native land. It has become acclimated a little everywhere. Since, through heredity, it has entered the blood and marrow of the people, and has spread alike in country and city, it has alarmed first physicians and lawyers, and little by little all thinkers. The race is stricken in a vital spot. Hospitals, insane asylums, and prisons give daily evidence of its progress. In some

countries it is easier to count those who are not than those who are addicted to it. Add to this that what is now drunk is radically different from what was drunk in old times. It is not in the domain of ideas only, that our age has discovered fraud. Its material as well as its intellectual and moral sustenance is poisoned. Its favourite drink is a cheap mixture, adulterated with spirits made from beet root and potatoes, with which the great manufactories inundate the world. It can be said with truth that it drinks its death and that of its children. The future is poisoned, and coming generations are doomed to blight, insanity, and crime. The consequences of alcoholism—economic, hygienic, moral, political, and social—can never be calculated. Of nine tenths of the ruin, disease, accidents, crime, fanaticism, and popular disturbances, we can truly exclaim: The cause is alcohol.

Alcoholism ravages the youth of the people to a frightful extent. There is hardly a form of amusement without it. It disturbs and destroys healthful pleasures; it prevents physical culture; it neutralizes the effects of social meetings where good-fellowship and relaxation are sought. Every meeting, every excursion, no matter what its object, runs the risk of ending in a drinking-bout. Manners become coarse, and talk and songs brutal.

Formerly the city relied on the influx of new blood from the fields and mountains to recruit its strength. These reserves are themselves affected. There are in the Vosges, to cite one example only, secluded valleys where the springs flow ever, where the air is pure, and

where the memory of man cannot recall an epidemic. But alcoholism reigns. The number of feeble babies is constantly on the increase. There is demoralization in habits, in the pocket, and in the household. The fruit of a life of labour disappears in smoke. Alcohol is more terrible than the plague, than war, or any scourge of Nature. Outward losses may be made good, and even decay in the world of ideas; but how shall we remedy an evil which devours blood, brains, and nerves, and destroys even the basis of life?

Sometimes, in reviewing our civilization, the question is asked, What can menace it? It cannot go down before an invasion of barbarians like that of antiquity. Its enemies, nevertheless, are not far to seek. They do not swarm on the distant horizon like the Huns and Vandals; they are in its midst, and alcohol is one of the most terrible.

What hope can there be for the future in a youth given over to alcohol? A democracy rests on the good sense of the people, on the wisdom and energy of its citizens, on the spirit of order, of work, of economy. For all these good things one can tremble as long as absinthe and brandy gain ground. They are the barbarians in our midst.

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You will say, by this time, that I began so sombre a chapter wrongly, in saying that the life of the people was one of those good things we know little about. I intend to prove my assertion. The things of which I have spoken are the warts, the excrescences, the diseases which disfigure and prey on their life. Yes, it is

unhappily true that in our healthy and robust people there has been a deterioration. The most thoughtful notice it, and speak of it about the family table, or tell you of it in confidence when conversation falls on serious subjects. But, despite all, the life of the people remains the great source of energy, of courage, of the spirit of sacrifice, whence society unceasingly renews its strength. The people is saved from nothingness by its hard life, its labour, and even its suffering. Its practical life nourishes its good sense. When we take the trouble to look at it near at hand, we see daily examples of wonderful patience and strength. The women, in especial, are admirable. Some carry superhuman burdens with a simple courage which would shame men most hardened to suffering. Some mothers, besides their household duties, do other work, always poorly paid, and have no respite the whole year long outside of a little sleep. Almost never is there any recreation. An outing, however small, is an event. When sickness or a husband's crime comes to complicate matters, one can fancy what their life is. What, indeed, are the burdens of those in easy circumstances compared with theirs! What a life! Compare the frivolous habits, the *morale*, superficial and careless, of idlers, and of those light-minded triflers who consider life an idle stroll. Compare, even, the staid and self-satisfied life of the well-to-do *bourgeois*. What a judgment does this comparison pronounce! There are ways of living and thinking which melt away like butter in the sun at contact with the people's life of stern reality. Such a life is a perpetual and elevating

lesson for the young. Whether they will or no, they who have any heart are touched.

And it is precisely because the life of the people contains these precious elements that we must preserve and protect it. Let us not forget that it is a treasure. To come in contact with it is one of the best ways of fighting against that artificial world which clutches and slays us. We must fraternize with the youth of the people for their good and for ours.

CHAPTER IX.

YOUTH AND REACTION.

IN view of the real difficulties which we encounter in the affairs of the mind, and which the analogous phenomena in the manifold departments of practical life render still more difficult, they who disparage the modern spirit cry shipwreck, and counsel reaction. For the modern spirit has furious detractors, who consider the existing crisis as a condemnation of a whole sequence of centuries. They arraign, at one and the same time, science, civil and religious liberty, and all the independent movements of humanity, whether theoretical or in practice, and hope for salvation only in a return, pure and simple, to the past. The men who share this point of view gather around them a body of youth, and, with great energy and a devotion which in some is admirable, try to detach it from the present and its aspirations, and imbue it with the spirit of the past which they would revive. It is a titanic enterprise when one considers the amount of effort necessary and the extent of their scheme; for this is what it proposes to do, — to consider all modern development, such as has come from the Renaissance, from the Reformation, from the Revolution, and from science, as a colossal

error; to efface this error of history, and lead back society to the *status quo ante*.

Nothing relating to man should lack interest to us. A reaction, therefore, is often legitimate and useful, provided that it be kept within limits which are not outside the general good. I declare, then, that I have no preconceived antipathy against the movement of which I speak. There is no monopoly of good in any one tendency of the mind; it is distributed somewhat everywhere. In general, that which has no reason for existence dies. When many minds, among them those of men of great moral worth, agree in taking a certain direction, then, in the conditions under which they live, there must be profound motives to determine this agreement. That others join the enterprise with mental reservations as to government or material interests, should not hinder us from recognizing the sincerity of the prime movers. He who would seek the truth must be just. I find it natural, then, that at critical epochs characterized by unceasing restlessness, we should be haunted by that grand past where humanity seemed to have found its utterance, which it has handed down as a sacred thing to all its children, and where thought, like life, seemed to assume of itself forms as stable as if moulded in brass. So much solidity and peaceful security tempt generations like ours, which are fighting with every wind and every wave. I can conceive moral lassitudes which throw the wearied thinker into the arms of an unchangeable dogma; I can conceive still more the regrets and indignation which seize believers attached to the holy traditions, the hopes, the consola-

tions, the worship which make up religion, when they see these things treated as old rubbish, and trampled under the feet of ignorance and irreligion. And these regrets I shall entertain still, in face of the negations, respectful though they be, of a materialistic science. At bottom there are grand treasures to defend and protect; not to recognize them is deliberately to ignore facts, humanity and all its interests.

The chief thing is to know whether the undertaking does not overreach its object, and exceed the power of man.

For my part I believe that it does overreach its object, and consequently injures itself, by denying progress and the good that has come from the spirit of tolerance, of justice, and of knowledge of the modern spirit; and that it commits a great injustice in confounding that spirit with atheism, realism, and disorder.

On the other hand, I am persuaded that no human power, individual or collective, can resuscitate the past as it was.

It is with great apprehensions for itself and the future of the ideas which are dear to it that I see a large body of youth enrolled in a work which would consist of suppressing four centuries of human life, and substituting for them a state of things that has disappeared. In the first place it would be necessary to disassociate ourselves from the age we wish to efface. Its blood flows in our veins, its evils are ours, we profit by what is good in it. It is through it that we are connected with the past by the thread of inheritance. We are not the children of our grandsires' grandsires. Between

them and us there are intermediate generations, of which we bear the trace in every fibre of our body and in every shade of our thought. To be a man of the past is as impossible as to be the son of one's great-grandfather. It is difficult for us to put ourselves, ever so little, in the place of these ancestors in order to understand and appreciate them. We have other standards of judgment, other methods of observation, and other inherited mental traits. Our world is in many respects a different one from theirs. But to bring back their life now, and to enter into the framework of habits, thought, and fancy which surrounded them, would be equivalent to reconstructing from its remains some lost fauna, so that it should live and flourish among us. The more I think of it, the more it seems to me that to live in the fourteenth century would be as difficult to one of our age as to live in the twenty-second.

We are, therefore, face to face with a total of very complex problems, the solution of the smallest of which would demand superhuman powers. But there is, above all, a very grave psychological problem closely connected with the genesis of convictions and belief. When one says to youth, "The world has gone astray for many centuries; we must retrace our steps; let us return to the bosom of the Church, the only depository of truth, of spiritual authority, and therefore of temporal power," see what they demand, — an effort of the will to admit *en bloc* the whole of Saint Thomas Aquinas. It is perhaps difficult, they say; but what would you have: we are so ill, and this alone can cure us.

Let us suppose that we have decided to follow their advice. We make an effort of the will to believe *en bloc*; we swallow down the remedy, notwithstanding our repugnance. Is that enough? No. This belief which we have adopted is inert. No freedom from doubt, no life can spring from it. It will act no more than a medicine which remains in the stomach just as when taken, without being assimilated and digested. If, then, this *ensemble* of doctrines which is offered for our adoption is to be of use, it is not sufficient to swallow it, it must be assimilated. In entering an intellectual and moral organism like ours, the past must undergo a complete digestion. Our thought will treat it after its own fashion and its accustomed laws; it will submit it to the test of experience, to examination; it will demand of it, in short, that it justify itself. Oh, we are far from demanding a demonstrable belief. Such an idea cannot occur to any one who possesses the slightest appreciation of mystery and the infinite. As well demand a pocket mountain or a portable ocean! But if the realities of belief are not those which the intellect measures, weighs, and adjusts, like arithmetical quantities, he at least who holds them must be in harmony with them. Belief is not like money which one drops into his purse. To be ours it must be born in the heart of our existence and our conscience, and transform itself into a personal conviction. Otherwise it lies in the mind like a foreign substance.

It is not enough to say: "Everything is going to rack and ruin. If we could only believe, hope, and worship as our fathers did, all would go well. Let us,

then, reassume their beliefs." What is necessary is to be convinced as they were; and to be convinced, it is necessary that our soul and our conscience should have thoroughly approved our motives, — that truth should have found in us a resting-place. In a word, belief by the will is a snare. One does not believe because he wills to do it, but because he cannot help himself. Belief by the will rests entirely on man's effort, as the world of ancient mythology rested on the shoulders of Atlas. This is not the belief which saves and vivifies, and to which we wish to give ourselves. That can be only the result of experience.

Let us suppose a man absolutely sincere, and convinced that the world is lost if it does not return to the thought and rules of conduct comprised in the narrow compass of traditional authority, but who has inwardly cut loose from the old belief. Let us suppose that, convinced of the practical utility of a belief which he respects but which he can no longer assimilate, he adopts this belief outwardly, suffers in its defence, and ends by dying for it, in the hope that his sacrifice will at least make others believe what he could not himself, except mechanically. What purpose do the labours of this martyr serve? We can believe in goodness, in the triumph of love, in the things holy and humane which have made a good man meet death, — we can believe, perhaps, in the martyr himself, though not in his principles. For these to be shared, they must be a part of our life. Fire alone sets on fire.

Herein is the secret of the weakness of many of the advocates of the past.

The reaction which would replace the modern spirit outsteps its authority too far, when it speaks in the name of the past. It does not represent all the past, — neither all the past of religion, nor all the past of Christianity. Its champions represent certain stages of that past formulated into rules of life, and certain forms of religious thought formulated into doctrines. But there have been developed in the vast regions of religious life flowers of a richness unheard of, which the Church has never cultivated. In its own garden trees have grown which it has tried to uproot, and others which it has first mutilated, but whose fruits it has afterward borrowed. Ought humanity to deprive itself of all the good not produced in one particular period of the past? And the evil which this past has done, — must it be forgotten and submitted to anew?

If the question presented itself thus: On the one hand scientific materialism, scepticism, the sum total of negations which strip humanity of its nobility, disorder, and unbelief, and on the other side all belief, all hope, and all the virtues, — it would be different. We should not hesitate a minute. These practical results would be in themselves alone the most irrefutable proofs of the truth of tradition. But the question cannot be so stated. If we were so to state it, we should do wrong. We should be lacking in respect for the youth we are bringing up, who take us at our word. In not recognizing the good which others have done, we should fail in respect for the truth. In short, in order to raise humanity, we should belittle it, and as a consequence ourselves.

More modesty and impartiality would make the champions of the past infinitely stronger. Why do they not learn from that past which is their hereditary fief, a grand and salutary lesson?

Its world, to-day crystallized and mummified, has been the most active, the most full of variety, the most susceptible of adaptation, of which history has preserved an example. It has known how to place itself on the highest level of antique culture, and to descend to the lowest and most ignorant. It has known Greeks and Barbarians alike. It was at ease in power and in slavery, in opulence and in misery. It has spoken all tongues, has travelled all roads, and its heart has throbbed for all that makes man's heart throb. And what a life, what popularity, what social power it has had! It began to lose a part of its influence only when it became wrapped in egoism, routine, and immobility. In proportion as it withdrew from the grand life of nations, has life died out in it. There is thus one hope only for you who admire and sincerely love this grand past: it is to imitate what was best and most humanizing in it. It is necessary for you to be broadened, to be transformed, to practise self-denial on a large scale, to cease to be behind the age of ideas, — even religious ideas, — and to go forward resolutely hand in hand with whoever loves and prays for man on earth.

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All this is said on the supposition that the reaction is serious and honest. But there is a reaction which it is impossible for us to consider as serious. It is a kind of religious dilettanteism which has made certain youthful

minds take delight in all sorts of old symbols, without increase of belief on that account, and above all without any idea of making of their religiosity a means of sanctification and of pure living. They seek in religion æsthetic and archæological enjoyment. They hang in their rooms old chasubles, statuettes of the saints; they play at a monastic life, and saturate themselves with the perfume of incense, the murmur of prayers, sacred music, and the soft and peaceful light which falls through cathedral windows; and believe that they pay great respect to the clergy in saying to them that they possess the Gospels and books of the hours bound in very old parchment, that they carry crucifixes hidden in their breast, and dip their fingers in holy water. They call this a reaction, rolling up their eyes sanctimoniously. This a reaction! Let us not play with words, and above all with holy things. To eat from a bishop's dish, or to drink wine from a chalice, does not entitle a man to call himself a Christian. Such religion is like that old furniture, heavy and severe, in which our age, by a singular contrast, loves often to surround as with a setting its frivolous habits and its idle conversation. It is a *bibelot*; that is all. My opinion is that one does it more honour by combating it than by rendering it such bizarre homage.

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What shall we say of another kind of reaction,—that which is only a political manœuvre, under the cloak of morality and religion? It must be stigmatized as the worst of profanations and the latest hypocrisy. As all sincere conviction and even all compulsory belief is

sympathetic to us, so this impious speculation with sacred things fills us with horror. For belief here is only a servant, a slave liable to the worst treatment. If anything could make us despise it, it would certainly be this dishonouring connection with political intrigue and knavery. A youth which was brought up in this atmosphere could not be otherwise at bottom than sceptical. Belief can be worthy of respect only when it is disinterested, compassionate, and when he who professes it is ready on its behalf for all sacrifices. The day when an ambitious man uses it to push himself in the world, or a common man to gain his bread, it is no longer belief; it is something which has no name, but which is more sad and more frightful than nothingness.

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There remains to us the exposition of a reaction purely political, without reservation on the side of religion or philosophy; a sort of restoration of arbitrary power, a rule of the sabre and the cross, intended to keep the appetites in check, and extolled by certain young ranters whom democratic principles irritate. *Oderint dum metuant*, they exclaim, quoting a celebrated phrase which he whom it is the custom to call the old apostle of force put in execution for more than twenty years. I do not believe in the success of a reaction of this kind, either in France or elsewhere. The first condition of a strong despotism is that it believes in itself. It must, without stumbling or blinking, go to any length, advancing over wills and hearts like a pitiless wheel of brass. The secret weakness of the despotic powers of our day is that they have lost faith in themselves. The

modern spirit has affected them in spite of themselves. It has shaken also the heart of the masses. Deprived thus of its double support, — discredited with those who employ it, and with those whom it ought to subdue, — force loses ground daily. This great despiser of immaterial realities depends, after all, on conditions of the mind. And these conditions no one can modify at will, because they are not the result of arbitrary effort, but of necessity. Every one must thoroughly realize that despotic power has been dethroned in the world since it has been dethroned in the human soul. The great thing which is being accomplished in different degrees in the heart of civilized society, no matter what its form of government, and which neither the regrets of some nor the excesses of others can arrest, is the evolution of temporal power, which is based on coercion, into spiritual power, which is moral authority, and is based on respect and conviction. All social functions, low or high, from that of the parent to the highest office of government, are undergoing a slow transformation. An office no longer honours the man; the man must honour the office. Can we turn back from this evolution of public spirit, which does not consist of changeable surface phenomena, but touches the very essence of things, and makes itself felt in all departments? To admit such a thing would be to have no conception of the force of ideas. It would be more easy to seize a mountain by its base and hold it at arms' length, than to change an idea grounded on conscience and the good sense of humanity, and built up grain by grain by the long labours of experience.

We conclude, then, that salvation will not come through a reaction against the modern spirit. Instead of trying to arouse a noble band of youth to isolate itself from the world in behalf of special interests, and to oppose like a ram the age which is moving forward and will move none the less, make rather an alliance with what is good in it, in order to fight against that which is injurious. If you can contribute anything to it, do it disinterestedly. That will be the best way to preserve for the world the good that is within you, for which you fight. I may add that it will be the most Christian way to fulfil your important mission.

CHAPTER X.

PATHS OF TO-MORROW.

I fear that the work of the twentieth century will consist in taking out of the waste-basket a multitude of excellent ideas which the nineteenth century has heedlessly thrown into it.

E. RENAN.¹

THE impression of disorder which we experienced in drawing off a balance-sheet of existing society has increased in proportion as we continue our walk through youth. Confusion and anarchy seem the terms best fitted to express its mental state. In all that we have seen, there is but a continuation and an aggravation of what has gone before. If we had only this to say, our book would be very depressing. We should never have written it. What would be the use of saying that decadence is going on, and that we are taking the downward road with an ever-quickenning step? Happily, this is not all. What we have stated thus far is only the dark side of the situation. There is an entirely different side, and one as real, which we have intentionally reserved for the end.

The first important point to consider is the spirit of disenchantment which more and more underlies char-

¹ *Reception de M. Jules Claretie.*

acter. They, who could enjoy living in a world without faith, without hope, and without love are few indeed. Even cynics have their days of depression. The world, such as it has become, pleases very few people. This is not a bad sign. Doubtless disenchantment of itself alone effects little; but it amounts always to a general confession of insufficiency. We can see in it the negative form of an aspiration toward a better state. This aspiration makes itself felt in those who, warned by disenchantment, ask if we have not taken the wrong road. How many men, and above all young men, have been asking this little question of themselves for some time? Others more advanced are positively certain that we have taken the wrong road. For them the experience of materialistic science and of realism is conclusive on this point. The tree is judged by its fruits; it is bad. Our spiritual and our material life languish because sacred and underlying laws have been broken. But it is not enough to be disenchanted, nor even to demand change. We have tried to show this in speaking of reaction among youth. How would society be helped by going from one excess to another? That would be to try to cure itself of one mutilation by a fresh mutilation of a different kind. The world, which reaction invites us to enter to make us whole, has also had its trials. Humanity has not waited until this century to find itself in a strait, and even to feel stifled. It is improbable that the lessons of history should be forgotten by intelligent youth to such an extent as to render a general reactionary movement probable. It is enough, then, to observe what is passing, to convince

us that reactionary tendencies, properly so called, are met only exceptionally, outside of the surroundings especially created to bring them into existence and to cultivate them.

Young men of independent thought, profoundly moved by existing problems, are seeking for them a solution less narrow and less illusory. A daily increasing number begin to understand that if there is a means of salvation it is in getting back to a normal life, in returning to fundamental principles, to the rudiments of things; it is in absorbing the good from far and near, both past and present, wherever it finds the smallest, and in renouncing exclusive tendencies and party interests in order to become again simply men.

In this path, which a part of our youth is about to take, it has had forerunners. It was impossible that the state of things which for so many years has existed in the world should not have affected certain minds. Could it ultimately have escaped those who think and go to the bottom of phenomena, that scientific materialism, industrialism, militarism, utilitarianism, all that sum total of products which reaction tries to lay to the account of the modern spirit, were the most brutal negations? It was not possible. That happened which could not but happen. Men by whom the contradictions of the century have been strongly felt have not ceased for an instant to point them out, to brand excess whether in theory or in practice, and to uphold amid the greatest discouragements the standard of human dignity, of the sanctity of spiritual things, of the high authority of conscience, and of all the realities which

the so-called positive conception of existence, as well as the old dogmatic spirit, treated as chimeras.

To cite from this phalanx two great names only, I will mention Edgar Quinet and Michelet, true prophets of the modern spirit. A flood of literature of every kind has drowned their voices, but what they have said is as true now as in their day; more true, even, because it seems as if truth became more striking as it makes progress against falsehood. These men, than whom none could be less suspected of denouncing science or democracy, have never ceased to point out their abuses and their errors, while inveighing against the old world of dogmatism. They have learned at the school of history respect for the soul of man in the integrity of its aspirations and its rights, and a hatred for all tyrannies; and it is for this reason that their words breathe a lofty impartiality, the result of the harmony within. They have found that golden mean, so hard to hold, about which error and excess have made society oscillate unceasingly from scepticism to belief, from anarchy to despotism. The direction they have indicated is the one wherein must be sought the solution of the problems which harass us. It goes without saying that I speak of direction in general, and that I do not swear by the statements of any one man.

Here, first, is an extract from Edgar Quinet, very touching as a prognostication of the future: "The bee prepares in advance food for the larvæ about to hatch. Let us do as the bee does. Let us prepare food for the world about to be born, and place it beside its cradle." In the same book, *l'Esprit nouveau*, we read: "When

I see the storms of passion which sway existing generations, and the kind of delirium which seizes every one, I say to myself that it is not from too great ambition that I desire to restore equilibrium to so many unbridled spirits. The age which contains such great evils surely contains their remedy,—near at hand, perhaps even lying at our very feet.

“The mariner in the tempest often makes himself fast to the mainmast, that he may not be swept away by the winds. I, in like manner, attach myself to that which I have found most fixed about me,—to the ideas and the truths which will outlive us all.

“What is necessary to-day to lift us out of the abyss,—an hour of sincerity.”

Let us copy a page from Michelet, which seems to have been written yesterday, so well does it sum up the present situation:—

“One fact is incontestable. In the midst of so much material and intellectual progress the moral sense has been lowered. Everything is advancing and developing; one thing alone grows less,—the soul.

“At this truly solemn moment, when the network of electric wires is extending over the whole world, centralizing its thought and making it acquainted with itself, what soul are we to give it? And what would happen if old Europe, from which it expects everything, should contribute only an impoverished soul?

“Europe is old, but she is also young in the sense that she has the genius of rejuvenescence against corruption. She alone knows, sees, and foresees. If she wills it, all is safe.”

This spirit, happily, though it has never ceased to act, has begun to rise with a new vigour in all departments of our national education.

It is doing there a work slow but far reaching, whose favourable results are daily more pronounced. I cannot wish other proofs than certain passages which I shall cite, adding thereto my prayers that they may be fruitful in practice.

Here, first, are extracts from two addresses by the minister of public instruction, Monsieur Léon Bourgeois,—delivered at the *Concours généraux*, 1890 and 1891.

In the first of these addresses, the speaker, after having described the different systems of instruction in the past of our nation, thus expresses himself:—

“Our system of education should certainly be broader. Nothing in its past is without interest or use to it. A great French philosopher thus defined, a few days ago only, the aim of our instruction: ‘It ought to make the evolution of mankind, with all that is best in it, an individual evolution.’

“All the philosophic conditions, whose sequence we have recalled, have been preparatory to the modern spirit of humanity. All the results of culture, too, have been of partial use. Our task should be to recognize and preserve whatever good either of them can still contribute toward the formation and development of a contemporary spirit.”

The address of 1891 accentuates the preceding, marking thus the fixity and the energy of the movement:—

“Have an ideal. An ideal is not merely, amid the

stifling atmosphere of human egoism, a breath of pure air which revives and vivifies; it is not, above the doubts of daily existence, a light which guides and saves us: it is something more than all this. I can express it in a single phrase, — to have an ideal is to have a reason for living.

"We are preparing our youth not for such or such a career, but for life. If to give a man an ideal is to give a direction to his whole life, a motive and a spring to his whole existence, we should find in it the aim of our education, — the highest duty of the master.

"A year ago I tried to show how necessary it is to the university to be a unit of thought and learning in shaping the intelligence of the youth of France. How much more necessary still is this unity of learning in the work of moral education, if the university wishes to attain its true object, to be what it should be, and that which the country demands of it, — the centre where are concentrated all the movements of the national conscience, and whence they are reflected on each new generation, — giving thus an impulse and life to the conscience of every one of its children.

"When I speak of this unity of learning, need I add that it does not concern itself with forcing on the mind a system of philosophy, and of promulgating I know not what metaphysical dogma on the nature of good and evil? The university of the republic respects all beliefs, and gives an example of tolerance to its most intolerant adversaries. Whatever opinion one may profess on the problems which are eternally propounded to the limited intelligence of man, the idea of good exists,

and, as a great French philosopher has said, that idea is a fact, and that fact is a force. And since society has existed, this force has not ceased to act on the world in tempering violence, in diminishing inequalities, in substituting justice for despotism, liberty for constraint, solidarity for hostility, in enlarging unceasingly the sphere of each man's duty toward others; and notwithstanding backslidings, notwithstanding partial defeats of truth and right, notwithstanding transient apotheoses of arbitrary power, in bringing humanity each day nearer the higher levels of peace, equipoise, and reconciliation."

It is a genuine anxiety for the future that runs through these words. When we are concerned with problems of education, the emptiness of some kinds of learning appears to us more evident than at other times. To test the merits of a system of theology, or even of no matter what principles of thought and conduct, it is enough to weigh their educational value. All which cannot be boldly taught youth is of no value. It was then very natural that the men charged with the responsibility of a thorough national education should propound questions such as these:—

"On what will our successors live if they no longer believe in anything, hope for anything, nor respect anything? What will support and console them, and give them strength to live and die in peace?"

We are men as were our fathers. Notwithstanding outward changes, our hearts have the same needs as theirs. Can it be that what inspired them has disappeared from the world? Doubtless our conceptions have changed, our interpretation of the universe is

modified. We are forced in the name of experience to protest against certain beliefs, and to refuse our assent to them. We, too, have our *non possumus*. But under the decaying forms of other days, are there no permanent realities which can aid us? There is no such stimulant to labour as necessity, no such seeker as hunger. The frightful poverty of our spiritual life has inspired us with salutary reflections. We must, then, turn again to the past, not in a servile spirit, but to seize its soul and make it live anew. For the light of a new day has come to this past which seemed to be disappearing in the mists. As we see that it too reached the truth, feeling its way through devious paths, and building piece by piece its spiritual habitation, we have understood it better than those who have shown it to us *en bloc* as a cold heraldic creation. Under their rigid forms we have found life, warmth, the bloom of birth and development. Thus, drawn near us by the intimate relations which history has opened, our fathers give us that counsel which sums up all spiritual pater-nity: "Add the best of that which you have conquered to the best of that which we have left you, and you will live and will remake a country of the soul."

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Preoccupations analogous to those we have noticed engage the flower of our youth. While the greater number continue to drift with the current of realism, some have come out from it and look toward other horizons. The life of to-day is hard for the youth who thinks. There are so many things to unsettle it and so few to

establish it. Amid the ruins of old beliefs and the materials still unwrought of the new edifice, out of harmony with the tendencies of the times, and surrounded by social troubles and by the relics of barbarism which our age drags behind it, like hideous rags beneath a king's robe, this youth has early come to feel anxiety for the future. The spectacle of scandals, of follies, of narrowness, of the abuse of brute force, of conflicting interests, of all the great strife of men and things, has inspired in it a noble loathing and a mighty desire for justice and moderation.

This desire shows itself in intellectual orientation, by a warm and kindly interest in all the manifestations of human intelligence. Young men have come to believe — a rare thing at their age, but a sign of the times — that truth is no longer included in a formula, but that it exists somewhat wherever man has thought, investigated, or suffered anything interesting or true. Doubtless this turn of mind recalls the multiform curiosity of dilettanteism, but it is also often an indication of that discreet reserve and of that desire for enlightenment which is the most favourable disposition in the search for truth. In a recent toast the present president of *l'Association des étudiants* has characterized this kind of existence in a way which strikes in a refreshing fashion at party spirit:—

"Our association is not one of those enlisted under the ephemeral standards of ambition, class, and party passions. It pursues slowly but surely a work of peace and knowledge only. It has the highest respect for the individual conscience; it leaves untouched the personal

convictions, the beliefs, whether political or religious, of every man. It is not drawn to any party, to any sect. It claims to be, before everything, — though not formally so called, — the youth of France, and especially the scholastic youth. We are and we wish to continue to be students, — those at least who are true to the scientific spirit, which is a spirit of disinterested tolerance, and to the democratic spirit, which is a spirit of justice and kindness. There are two great anxieties only common to us all, — the anxiety for the highest possible intellectual development, and the anxiety for social amelioration; for the first produces individuality, the second purifies it. Above the beliefs that divide us are the aspirations which draw us together; it is these which we prefer.”¹

To describe further the dominant trait of this youth, which is a respectful independence, I will say that it loves science, that it considers it as one of the supports of humanity, that it knows what we owe to it and what to hope from the exactness of its methods. Gladly does it applaud words like these: —

“Time will doubtless revise, it will perhaps utterly destroy, some of the results acquired by contemporary science, — our systems of synthesis will perhaps last us no better than theirs lasted our predecessors; but our methods of analysis, our rational view of the world, the general orientation of the scientific spirit, — these are acquisitions which can never hereafter perish except in a total downfall of civilization. This conviction has become the very basis of our understanding. On this

¹ H. Bérenger, *Banquet de l'Association*, 1891.

unassailable foundation all our rebuilding will be done.”¹

At the same time it takes into consideration the limitations of science and its weaknesses: “We must before all recognize that neither science nor democracy is sufficient to itself. Without the higher law which reconciles them, they are only blind and barbaric forces. Science is not sufficient in itself. In what, indeed, do all the highest scientific generalizations end, if not in the idea of movement, itself incomprehensible without the mysterious idea of force, — that is to say, a purely psychological idea? The origin of all modern science is a self-evident truth borrowed from the mind itself. Democracy, too, is not sufficient in itself. It would be simply a savage fight of classes and interests, if it were not dominated by the spirit of justice and of charity. It is then, finally, the mind and its highest, most active, and most fruitful principle, love, which ought to direct modern evolution.”²

There is, at the bottom of this, thorough sincerity and a fine spirit of justice. Many conversations, investigations made in various centres of study, and the reading of those varied and ephemeral productions which fill the papers and the reviews of the young, have convinced me that these tendencies are not isolated. A new orientation announces itself.

We can nowadays hear young men, preoccupied with intellectual affairs, scoff at those two terrible goddesses, analysis and criticism. Not that they discredit

¹ M. de Vogüé, *Banquet de l'Association*, 1890.

² H. Bérenger, *Bulletin de l'Association*, févr. 1890.

the spirit of discernment, and after having despised mystery fall in the opposite extreme of denying the rights of reason and judgment; but they consider that criticism, which is based on the point of view of positive science, when applied at random to the affairs of the intellect becomes an aberration. To use the judgment in this way, is to lack judgment. Each lock must be opened with its own key. One kind of criticism would simply suppress history by its mode of conceiving historic certainty, as it suppressed spiritual realities by obstinately refusing to call facts those only which are facts in a material sense. That grand truth so authoritatively proclaimed by H. Lotze, "the rôle of mechanism in the world is as universal as it is absolutely subordinate,"¹ is slowly making its way in our minds.

Analysis carried to extremes, which had reached the point of causing real disease in the young, sees its prestige diminish. In vain it calls itself inexorable, its charm is broken for many. They do not feel themselves face to face with a hundred-eyed monster who sees everything, and searches the very bones and marrow, but face to face with a gratuitous and sometimes ridiculous pretence. They are irreverent enough to find that the analysis which aligns in formulas and by measure our being, our feelings, thought, and life, is most of the time only like dismemberment or sleight of hand. In this fashion do our children analyze their dolls, and clever jugglers make mountains of things come out of a hat. He who claims to have analyzed us should be able to put us together again after he has taken us apart. The time

¹ H. Lotze: *Mikrokosmos*.

has passed when an abstract knowledge of our material being sufficed us to explain man. Problems come to life, of which those who call thought a secretion of the brain, have no idea, and which are not suspected by those minds in which psychology seems to be confounded with physiology. That little phrase *I know*, formerly so sure of itself and so self-satisfied, meets incredulity everywhere. The sense of mystery, which is indeed but one of the forms of the sense of reality, has awakened in face of the unknown. That no one can explain life; that no one can bridge the abyss which separates material action from thought, from the simplest sensation even; that there are mysteries without number in the domain of every day, where, nevertheless, we move with ease, — this is what now strikes all who reflect. Respect for science has not diminished, but respect for man, for the invisible realities, has increased.

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Doubtless it would be puerile to give way to hope too easily. We climb with pain the slopes we descended so quickly. But the movement exists, it is an actual fact, and it is not youth alone who is affected. Everywhere they who search and think are trying to lift the leaden canopy under which humanity can no longer submit to live.

The especial attention which the most diverse minds give to the religious feeling, so lately scorned, is not one of the least symptoms of this search for new paths. There are many ways of looking at this subject, and often a great lack of knowledge of its history. Some

confound Catholicism with Christianity, and see in it the salvation of the future; others speak of a renaissance of the gospel in the sense of the modern spirit; others are enthusiasts for esoterism, theosophy, the comparative study of religions; others still are waiting to see absolutely new horizons rise of such an extent that we shall see at last the synthesis, so laboriously pursued, of all the past and all the present. "One of the marks of the youth of to-day — I speak of thinking youth — is a longing for the divine."¹ We receive this testimony with pleasure. Incomplete though the manifestation of this feeling is, we rejoice at it. What is important, above all, is the state of mind which gave it birth. It is very interesting to note how that state of mind shows itself in the centres more particularly devoted to religious studies. We meet in them every day a large number of young men who have cut loose from extremes. Where their predecessors were entrenched in orthodoxy or in rationalism, and where these archaic distinctions still suffice for the multitude, we see them resolutely clearing a new road. They have gone beyond the narrow point of view of unyielding orthodoxy, and beyond even that of negative criticism, — two exaggerations equally powerless to appreciate the soul's affairs. Their aim is to lose nothing of tradition and to sacrifice no right of the present, but to apply themselves to discovering truth no matter where they find it, to render it homage, and to express it in language as simple and practical as possible. Party spirit, which has been for a long time the soul of reli-

¹ E. Lavisse : *La génération de 1890.*

gious centres, and which continues to be its evil genius, is held by them in horror.

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The whole literature of youth is gradually taking on new shades. A mysticism, sometimes healthful, sometimes pernicious, but which, under each and every form, is in contrast with the realism of the period before it, shows itself in a multitude of poems and essays on various subjects. We read now frequently writings by the young which would have appeared strange and even impossible a few years ago, and which foretell a new literary flora. The leaven is spreading and continually gaining strength. Without knowing or planning it, studious youth are stirred by similar aspirations, and often give them identical expression. In a word, there is a new life stirring.

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More heartily than these signs of a thought which seeks new rules, and of a morality preoccupied with the search for a new basis, do we welcome a new movement which has been accentuating itself among youth for some years. This movement is still very feeble, if we look at its practical results, though they already begin to show; but it is real.

I speak of the social movement. My profound conviction is that this movement will be the pivot of human thought and action in the coming age. It is under this particular form that the philosophical, religious, scientific, and international problems which exercise the world will find a temporary solution. They suggest themselves more and more as the separate constituents

of the same grand problem of humanity, and all reach their culmination in the question of the organization of life. All departments of the moral or material governments of the world of to-day have had to deal with social questions. They have gained such strength that they force themselves on the attention of great and small alike. The oldest powers, whether temporal or spiritual,—they who have been accustomed to disregard the opinions of the masses, their happiness and their misery, and to lay their clutch on every one,—are suddenly brought down to giving their attention to these erstwhile despised questions. We can well say that the stone rejected by the builders has become the headstone of the corner. Men who are accustomed to seeing youth in the advance guard of new movements are astonished to see ours so long unmoved, so impassible, before the social question. For many, a few years since, it had no existence. Happily it has to-day taken a firm hold of the majority, and it must be admitted that it is in good hands. Youth takes these questions in that broad human spirit which they demand. They have lost greatly under other treatment. Selfish interests and unavowed ambitions have too often seized on social questions to make use of them, and to sterilize them at the same time. With the multitude, they easily degenerate into material questions. Nothing will contribute like the accession of our studious youth to give to this complicated social problem its true breadth, and to restore to it all the elements which belong to it as a whole. I shall return to the subject later. It will suffice now to mention the admirable fruit which it has already borne

among youth. It has awakened its *esprit de corps*; it has encouraged solidarity, unity, and organization. It has brought teachers nearer the students, and students nearer teachers, making them foresee in those reunions whose memory will never fade, the happiness which consists in discovering that they are brothers and members of the same body. How can generations live and die without experiencing, in all its powerful charm, this old and holy bond, commonplace though it be!

I consider the founding of our *Association générale des étudiants* and similar societies as one of the happiest events among our contemporary youth. At the same time studious youth feels itself drawn toward the people. The feeling is not yet reciprocated; but if the desire for fraternization is aroused on one side, that is enough to bring it about. Men of heart and action point out this field as one of those on which advance must be made. I cannot refrain from citing here the words of Monsieur Jules Ferry at the banquet of the *Association des étudiants* in 1890: "You must love still another thing,—not only that grand suffering of which your president has just now spoken so eloquently, but that proletariat from which you, as we all, have kept too far away, not in our sympathies, for our sympathies are warm; not in our labours, for we have done much for it, and much that it does not believe and will not allow itself to believe; but you must love it through personal action, and through individual and daily association."

Social preoccupations in youth are shown by a tendency toward action, and by a predilection for men of

action, and for writers who, like Monsieur Melchior de Vogüé, show us in their writings a generous conception of life and new reasons for struggling and hoping. Certain intellectual states, lately so highly esteemed, seem now simply idleness and desertion. Man is placed in the world for personal exertion, and he must share its work. We are beginning to believe in effort, in moral force and its pre-eminence over every other power. Optimists are succeeding pessimists, and sociologists are succeeding egoists. But whatever be the reasons for the present change, it is evident that we must rejoice in it. From whatever quarter confidence may have returned to youth, it is welcome. I know that youth is severe in its judgment of its predecessors, even unjustly so. They who to-day and not without self-sufficiency, plume themselves on their political positions, would be greatly surprised could they hear themselves judged by their immediate successors. In their eyes they would seem like characters from another epoch, if not another order of beings. The dogma of parties, the subtlety of the distinctions that divide them, many a question to-day of vital importance, and especially our incapacity for revising our opinions, — all these would seem to them like the phenomena of a very old civilization. The young romanticists of 1830 had no more sarcasms for the classicists than our young sociologists have for politicians.

The daily wear of life will correct these exaggerations. It is reassuring to know that young men propose to mingle in its affairs, that they take it very seriously, that they see clearly in it their duties, that they set them-

selves to find out by study and reflection ways and means to accomplish them, that their young imagination kindles with sensibility, and that their mental outlook is not at all a narrow one, nor are the aspirations of their hearts limited. We may ask whence comes this sudden change whose signs we have enumerated. Ought we to see in it only a natural reaction provoked by the tendencies of the preceding period? This is a factor, and a strong one. But is it not astonishing that such a contrast can be noted between one generation and another? For my part I cannot refrain from congratulating our country on this new spirit. If belief in exertion has been reborn, we owe it to that great energetic act in which have been concentrated so many good wishes and persistent hopes, and which we may call our uprising. This fact is in itself alone a superb contradiction to the fatal and grosser powers, at the same time that it furnishes an argument for the modern spirit. There is nothing astonishing in that. To him who is not blind this lesson is one of the grandest that can be beheld. Youth alone is not affected. Do we not see by the side of the awakening of belief in mystery, in human dignity, and in social justice, another movement far outside our national boundaries? The human soul begins to shudder beneath the heavy chain of materialism, in the domain of ideas, of brute force, and in that of facts. Right is in the ascendant; force is cast down. Everywhere belief in purely material power totters. What a sign of the times it is, that on leaving a period like our own, where it sometimes seems as if justice and love were silenced forever, our hearts catch

themselves beating at their very names. The ice is melting from Europe; our youth feels in its veins the sap of spring. At this moment, when many belated souls are preaching the old *régime*, and are offering to cure us of all our ills in exchange for our liberty, this is what I see most clearly: the star of democratic France, obscured for a moment by brute force, and scoffed at in turn by the partisans of the old despotism or the new barbarism, climbing the horizon like the harbinger of better times.

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But what influence can this movement which we see manifesting itself have on the youth of the people? It is difficult at the moment to decide. One can always lay down the rule that it is among the people that old things last longest. Virgil has said, —

. . . *Extrema per illos*
Justitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.

It is among the people that we find good old customs years after they have disappeared elsewhere. We even meet antediluvian fashions, old books which no one any longer reads, and old worn-out arguments. We must therefore wait for a long time yet, until the ideas whose awaking we have pointed out make their slow way among the masses. They will reach them, as negations have reached them, by that same power of example and of radiation which we have shown to be inevitable. They will circulate more quickly through the young, and from them will work through the masses, if that harmony so desirable between educated

youth and the youth of the people can be brought about. The France of to-day needs to raise, each day more and with greater firmness and clairvoyance, a high democratic ideal, and to infuse it with public spirit. Without that ideal, despite its prerogatives and its liberties, a democracy falls rapidly under the *régime* of error, and passes through disorders into servitude. While waiting for youth to recognize and practise in all their extent the duties of an intermediary between the highest intelligences and the masses, we will rely a little on a pure press, on good books, — in a word, on all good influences, and especially on a new ally of immense import where youth is concerned, — the school. I ask to explain myself in detail, because the subject is so momentous.

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There are institutions which recall the old scapegoat which the Israelites loaded with all their sins, and which, when he finally escaped from their hands, accursed and racked with blows, plunged into the desert, hearing behind him, to spur him on his way to death, the outcries and imprecations of a whole people. The lay school is one of these institutions. In some mouths its name sounds almost like the devil's school. For these persons it is the antechamber of the jail. Its teachers doubtless curse, instead of praying, and in their precious lessons teach youth veritable abominations.

One of the rules of prudence, in these days of skilful perversion of facts, is to inform itself scrupulously as to persons or institutions which are bitterly attacked. In the interests of justice, I have followed this rule for a

long time, and I have proved that it is the best things which are worst spoken of. My rule, then, necessitates a visit to the primary school. Why so many outcries, so many accusations, such persistent hate? Let us inform ourselves thoroughly and with impartiality.

My best way to get the information would have been to become a pupil. But I have passed the limit of age. Besides, I was one formerly for many years. We were taught the catechism, it is true, but so little and so badly that we would have done better to learn it outside. But apart from lessons in the catechism, the master was a good man, and his words were full of straightforwardness, of good sense, and of tact, and I shall never forget them. Certainly this may have changed since then. To satisfy myself thoroughly, I set myself to study the programmes, the methods, the personal instruction in the different grades, in order to get an insight into the instruments, the organization, the spirit of this institution which was denounced to me as in the highest degree corrupting. Not content with examining it from the point of view of the teachers, I examined it from that of the scholars. I entered into the life of some of these young patients, my especial friends. I felt their pulse and listened to their heartbeats, that I might trace the effects of the instruction given them; and this is what I think on the subject. The greatest work that has been done in twenty years is that which has been unostentatiously carried on by the public school. It is the true medium of national education, the modest intermediary, but one, far-reaching indeed, between the people and those heights where

modern thought in its loftiest sense is developed. An intermediary, serious, prudent, and disinterested, it applies itself to condensing human affairs into some simple principles as a firm basis whence one can make an orientation of public spirit in practical life just as one has made an intellectual and moral orientation. But it has one great fault, I confess. It is its wish to serve every one, and to remain within the limits of universal equity and human unity. This renders it absolutely unsuited to the requirements of party spirit. Not only is it of no service to it, but if anything can injure or weaken that spirit, it is the school.

That a school be unsectarian, free from connection with this or that religion, independent, in a word, from the point of view of the confessional, is a great good. You feel the necessity of saying to children, even from their school-benches, that there are different ways of believing and worshipping, and that there are profound dissimilarities between men which ought to be emphasized, in order not to make of man an abstraction. For my part, I recognize another need: it is to leave them in ignorance of this state of things as long as possible, and to bring them up first as brothers. In laying thus a common human basis of respect, it seems to me that we help on the disposition which one must be in to say, *Our Father who art in heaven*. On the contrary, in isolating them with care, in order to give different kinds of religious instruction, we risk strengthening in them the feelings which find utterance in: *Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men*. I persist, then, in considering freedom from religious control is

of advantage to the school, provided always, on the other hand, that it is not connected with an anti-religious sect. This last supposition, born of the excessive zeal of some fanatic laics and urged besides from ill-will, is nullified by its entire practice and spirit. No, the unsectarian school is not a godless school. It has left the region of detail to mount to higher planes. The things of the soul there taught belong to an universal domain, — that domain where we fraternize above all petty differences. In religion, as in politics and in morality, individual and social, the unsectarian school is before everything human. I see it inspire, more and more, certain principles, moderate, vigorous, and indispensable, which are the quintessence of practical wisdom and the basis of society. We live in an age when we must search fields in common, that we may gain strength and march toward the future hand in hand. Whatever the religion to which we adhere, and even if we adhere to none at all, such as we are, rank and file, we have need to become converts to humanity. It is the grand aspiration of the noblest souls of this crumbling and inquiet age. Something of this aspiration, very modern and very widely open to all that is just and true, has entered into the primary school. May it increase and spread! Since I have realized this, the humble roof of the school, its walls, its benches, its blackboards, the silent and patient labours of its masters and scholars, assume in my eyes an immense importance; and when I see the evils that devour this nation, the passions that divide it, the crises it passes through, — all the *ensemble*, in short, of what one dreads when he loves mankind, — one of my

hopes and my consolations is the little common school. We must love, respect, and sustain it. We ought all to attend it during our early years, that it may form in the heart of our being a solid and common base, which will remain to us as a precious souvenir, even after each of us shall have travelled different roads in life and thought, toward the most distant horizons.

In clearing the way for the reparative ideas, and the new life which should save us, little by little, from the evils from which we suffer, we have an ally deep in the heart of the people. The people have a generous heart, and they suffer. Neither their generosity nor their suffering can reconcile them long to the world without pity, which realism has begot. The more progress this made, the more hideous did it seem, the more odious did it become; and already an obscure presentiment reveals to the man of the people that in losing hope, dignity, and faith in his destiny, he loses his most precious treasure; and that, when he loses reverence, he is working for his own destruction. Trusting and fighting for the right, let us live for it, and sooner than we perhaps dare to hope it will win the masses.

I conclude, then, that notwithstanding the black clouds that fill our horizon, notwithstanding the troubles, the errors, the faults, from whose consequences we are suffering, there is reason to be confident and to take courage. Something new is born in the heart of our youth. "An evolution is under way, mysterious still, but close at hand, and perhaps of great proportions."¹

¹ H. Béranger: *La jeunesse intellectuelle et le roman français contemporain*.

They who rouse in the night, and anxiously scan the horizon, breathe again. In truth, we are waking from a gloomy nightmare. Standing on the brink of nothingness, we have measured its depth. We have felt hope and belief die within us; but the dream is over, and already where the night is paling, grows on our eyes the white line of the dawn. It is not yet a distinct line, — a thin silvery fringe, rather, on the thick and heavy garments of the night; but at its sight hope reawakens. The future has still happy days; the end of belief and love is not yet. Courage now, and strong hearts! Against the brutal law of a vanishing egoism, against sophistry in ideas and life, we must oppose justice, truth, and simplicity. But that we may be stronger and see life better, — for the future is for clear-sighted believers, — let us steep ourselves in its sources and climb its heights.

BOOK THIRD.

TOWARD THE SOURCES
AND
THE HEIGHTS.

Lucem in alto quærens, vitam in profundis.

Book Third.

CHAPTER I.

IS THE WORLD OLD ?

I have come too late into a world too old.

A. DE MUSSET.

Die unbegreiflich hohen Werke

Sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag.

GOETHE.

IS the world old? The Preacher thought so. *There is nothing new under the sun*, said this disillusioned old man; and the impression of senile lassitude which these words betray has left an echo running through expiring centuries and worn-out lives. Everything is old; everything has been said and resaid, seen and re-seen. There is no more freshness, nothing that has not been published abroad. The words "wonderful, unforeseen, admirable," or simply the word "new," are terms of a vocabulary out of use. The qualities which they express have ceased to exist. The sun is old, the world, the bald mountains, the riven rocks; old is human life and all that it contains; old is misery, old is love; all our works are old; our art and literature are but old rubbish worked over. Society is so old that the new-born are born old. They are worn out before they have lived, tired before they have worked; the mark of

decrepitude is on their forehead. And this impression of atrophy and decay our century has but accentuated by its excess, its feverish life, its rage to see everything, to classify everything, and to define everything. All its roads are worn. Everywhere we advance in some one's tracks. The earth and history, the material and the spiritual world, all have been gone over. If, to escape this horrible impression of living on warmed-over dishes, we try to take refuge in the bosom of the past, the old religions give the same impression under a form still more accentuated. For them, indeed, everything has been known, fixed, and controlled in advance, since time immemorial. We live for the ten thousandth time the same life, we must repeat the same formulas that others have repeated before us and that others will repeat after us, and it will be the same till the end of time. The account of the infinite is made up. There is nothing more to be discovered. There is no more revelation, because God himself, God more than anything else, is old; he has ceased creating for a long time.

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Do not believe a word of this. These are the arguments and the impressions of those who confound the world with their own poor little existence.

"There are times when we grow old more quickly than at others. In the days of scepticism our souls age rapidly, because they know not where to draw fresh strength. Not a spiritual conversation is there, nor a breath from the higher regions! Man makes himself dust before he is dead, and sees it not. Herein is the

danger of our times, — moral drought. Let us seek, then, new springs whence we may drink while our thirst is still alive."¹

There are, truly, things which command respect from their age, and others from being often seen; but if this is true of a relative truth, it is much more true, and indeed absolutely true, that nothing is old under the sun, not even the sun itself. Everything is new. The newest of all, perhaps, are the commonplaces which have always filled the life of man, and before which the novelties of the day, which wither and fade so quickly, count as little as the moment that takes its flight into eternity. Everything old! said over and over and thoroughly known! One must be ignorant, indeed, to say that. The truth is, that we know almost nothing, that we have only vestiges of knowledge, and that beyond them stretches that great unknown whence spring every instant the most astounding surprises. For each worn rut there are endless regions where no foot of man has ever trod. In the material universe, as in the life of the soul and in human society, so great is the virgin soil that what we know is as nothing in comparison.

And yet how do we know this? What relation does the portion of the world which man has stirred with the shovel and the plough bear to the immensity of space and of worlds? Exactly the same as our knowledge and our experience bear to the reality of things. The spaces we have traversed are like a child's step on the vault of heaven. Our vices, even those most

¹ Edgar Quinet : *L'Esprit nouveau*.

frightful, cannot soil creation. What is the little foul air with which we surround our abnormal existence, in comparison with the blasts which blow over snowy summits and sweep across oceans?

We have repeated too often the saying of the Preacher. Youth has assimilated it. The first condition of a renaissance of true life is to throw overboard this idle talk of a *blasé* and disillusioned octogenarian. Happy they who understand this, for it is the beginning of salvation. Unhappily there are those who have lost the ability to understand it. There are persons for whom everything is absolutely old. A society in such a state is ready for collapse, and men in such a state are ready for nothingness. These things are premonitions of death, symptoms of a catastrophe close at hand. Let us leave this way of speaking to those who have reached the end of their world, and take boldly for ourselves the motto of those who are beginning it.

The first good and the first duty of a young man is to be young. To real youth everything is young. The capacity to feel and discover the newness and the freshness of the world keeps fresh its soul and life. It is curious about everything; everything impresses it, and over everything, corporeal as well as spiritual, floats for them that aureole which opens to them through finite things a vision of the infinite. Life is a revelation, — a revelation on a grand scale to humanity, and a special revelation to each individual. We lay bare the world through our own conscience and that of humanity. In vain has man loved, hated, prayed, investigated, suffered, and died for innumerable centuries. For

those who are passing through it all, who are living for their own sakes and not by proxy, love, hate, prayer, research, suffering, and death are as new as at their birth. Nature takes care that these things do not grow old. All the stains, the crimes, the impostures, the falsehoods of mankind cannot prevent there always being those who discover for themselves love, the religion of the heart, the pleasures of learning and research, just as if no one had ever experienced these things before. Nothing is truer than this. Creation is wonderfully rich. To find it poor, one must be sterilized oneself. An abnormal and artificial life produces this result. In vain do men declare, write, publish, and sing or bewail in every key that the world is old, worn out, and commonplace; the birds sing a denial, the roaring ocean shouts it aloud, the sun and world proclaim it louder still, and all agree that youth and growth are the eternal foundations of all things.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE.

How we must take it.

WHAT is life?

Poets have called it a dream, — beautiful for some, evil for others, but without other consistence. It has been called a burden, also, and a strife. Materialistic science has tried to explain life as a series of assimilations and disorganizations; for it life is a phenomenon of organic chemistry. Philosophers seek an answer in metaphysics, and theologians in religion. *Cur simus conditi* (Melancthon). In short, no one has explained it, and no one ever will explain it. The Bible says, in language of incomparable beauty: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*; but it does not give his reasons nor his methods. Nevertheless we live. I do not imagine that even the most curious await, as a condition of living, the secret of life. The wisest thing is to consider this question simply from a human point of view, which is this: Life is a fact. This fact antedates our reason. We are alive before we are conscious of it, before we have proof of it. When we reach the point of recognizing our existence, we have existed for a long time, and there is no way out of it. Man, indeed, can as little destroy himself as he can create himself. Non-existence, as well as existence, is beyond his

power. But once we recognize that we are alive, we must consider this fact, that we may act accordingly. Though we cannot explain it, there are a thousand ways of appreciating or depreciating existence, of using it or abusing it.

Human life appears to us the flower of the life of the globe; and the life of the globe, at every stage of its evolution, presents itself as the highest result of all the hidden labours of the active forces of Nature. Life is the result of an immeasurable number of preceding efforts. For our instruction geologic strata unveil their mysteries to our eyes, and show us, through successive forms, a constant advance toward perfection. The archives of human history depict the like efforts on a higher plane, and under aspects more impressive, because they appeal more to us. Our life is then a result; but it is impossible for thought to grasp its endless chain, reaching back into the night of time, without feeling obliged to prolong the chain into the future. In truth, if life is a result, it is a promise also. It is the most eloquent form of aspiration and design. For as we live through a power we do not control, so we bear within us the results of struggles in which we have not participated, and we virtually contain the future. Engrossed in its advance, which astonishes us by its rapidity or its slowness according to the moment, we are as it were enwrapped, despite ourselves, in that first cause which has originated all things, makes them what they are, and leads them through every stage of transformation to the end indicated in their very essence. At the same time we feel that we can draw away from this first

cause or draw closer to it. We enjoy a kind of free-will, limited by our very nature, which constitutes the basis of our liberty and our responsibility.

In a word, our life is the *résumé* of long labours and the prophecy of a whole future. We can join in these labours, and can collaborate with the future, or we can antagonize them and it. If we rise to a religious conception, we can state this certitude in this way: Our life is the grand combined work of God and humanity, and their great hope. *Man is the expectation of God.* In thus speaking we affirm the value of life as against those who despise or depreciate it. We affirm it not only against the disciples of nothingness, but even against certain religious ascetics, who confound in the term "worldly vanities" the artificial life which is the result of our errors and our faults with life itself. With their gloomy views as to our wretched existence, they actually have the air of creditors of the Almighty, declaring the present world in bankruptcy. At the very least, according to them, the earth is only a badly planned colony, an enterprise which has failed, which is only supported at the expense of the mother country, and which is no credit to her.

I am going to dwell further on this way of taking life, for I wish to make it clear that it is not the result of fantasy, but entirely in the nature of things.

La Fontaine has said, —

On a souvent besoin d'un plus petit que soi.

To appreciate life man has need of some one smaller than himself, and I affirm that above all does civilized

man, the man of letters, or the young student accustomed to a life of thought and to investigate the real reasons of things, need beings simpler than himself, in order to thoroughly understand existence. In proportion as he submits his life to analysis and to rational examination, is he tempted to confound it with what he has learned, and to find in it only that which he has seen or thinks he has seen. To enter thoroughly into the facts of life, its power, its stubbornness, the invincible animation in it, it must be observed among simple people, who hold it fast with all the energy of unconsciousness.

When one lays down at the outset of his life a syllogism, and deduces his existence and its purpose from certain arguments, he has built on a very frail foundation. You have often seen little children playing at the foot of large rocks and propping them up with wisps of straw or bits of rotten wood. Life rests on our arguments, as the rocks on these fragile supports. If it had only these for support, it would long since have gone down in nothingness and despair. The reasons which man gives to himself for life are always insufficient. It is important to declare this; for it is not a weakness, but a strength. Life ought to be taken as are the rocks, the mountains, as are the stars of heaven; that is, as are all realities against which — Heaven be praised! — we are powerless, and which exist of themselves alone. It is taken thus by those simpler beings to whom I have alluded. I mean animals and children, and that healthful and robust class of the people in whom lies the reserve force of life, as the reserve force

of rivers lies in the glaciers. We are in the habit of saying that these beings are under the impression of the moment, that the present governs them. We can say more truly still, that at the moment of strong impressions there is for them neither past, present, nor future. They hold life *sub specie æterni*. I have in mind especially children and persons such as I have just now described, and who, I admit, are rare. They are truly alive, because their impressions are wondrously strong, and they show it. Everything is real and stable to them. Recall the memories of your childhood, — the paternal roof, your father's and your mother's face, the smallest tree, the least stone, and above all, in the world of morality, the positive and clear-cut distinction between good and evil which characterizes a child, and often puts to shame grown people. Later on the idea of time and of relationship intermingles with a crowd of memories which deaden these impressions, but all that is seen, heard, or touched in infancy is clearly defined. Existence, with its fixity, its necessity, its sculptural reality, appears to the child and to the simple-minded man as a vision of eternity. This is why their tears are

- so touching, so real, so despairing, and their laughter so
- joyous. Childhood and the people have not discovered
- that melancholy and unwholesome phrase, — life is a
- dream. There is only one word to designate their feeling as to it, but the word is perfect. They believe that
- it exists. Are we not here in agreement with that most living of men, with him who said, *I am the life*?
- Has He not said, Consider the birds and the flowers?
- Has He not said, Be like little children? And this is,

in truth, our answer to the question, How must we take life? To take life as a fact, a primordial fact; to consider it as a real thing, important in all its parts; to take it *au sérieux*; to take it as does a happy-hearted, healthful, thoughtless child, as do the people who have not undergone our intellectual dislocations, — this is what must be done if we would still feel its powerful, never-failing tide — if, in a word, we would be young. This is its foundation stone.

CHAPTER III.

THE IDEAL.

THE instinctive love of life may go astray and degenerate into that excess which in every one turns a quality into a defect. When we say that we must love life, that we must hold to it with all our hearts, that we must consider it as our chief good, we do not mean to speak of that cowardly and egoistic love which clings to personal existence and its pleasures. It is life in general, in all its breadth and with all that it contains, which we mean. Life may be loved as the brute loves it,—the miserable animal which values only the ability to eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy itself. It may be loved as the coward loves it,—he who dreads suffering above everything, and whose acts are inspired by fear alone. This is a wretched way to love life. This is not knowing it; it is being interested in its surface simply, and leaving its depths unexplored. Though there are, unhappily, many men who look at it in this way, the great majority have never done so. There are always those who love life for the good to which it may be consecrated,—in a word, for that which may be made of it. It is in this sense that the Greeks, stigmatizing this inferior love of it, attached a shade of

disgrace to the adjective *φιλόβιος*. It is in this sense that Schiller has said, —

*Der Güter grösstes ist nicht dieses Leben,
Der Uebel grösstes aber ist die Schuld.*¹

These words preach no contempt of life, but the contrary. If the spirit of devotion and sacrifice is possible,—and Heaven knows that humanity has furnished and does furnish every day proofs incontestable,—if man can give himself to a cause, it is not because he despises life. On the contrary, it is because he is animated by a higher conception and another love than that which we repel. The baser love makes us lose life, because it rivets us to that which is only its husk; the higher love preserves life for us, though it may even urge us to lose it.

In truth, this is very simple, though it is, after all, the greatest thing in the world and the most difficult to practise. The life which the egoist and the coward love is not all of life; it is but a small portion. They substitute individual existence for existence in general, and in this individual existence they chose for themselves the narrowest and the frailest portion. Why should we be surprised if the end of such a love is nothingness and disgust? But in loving that grand life of humanity of which ours is a part, and, beyond the life of humanity, that life of which in its turn humanity is but a revelation,—in loving goodness, truth, and justice we go beyond our own individual existence, and become

¹ "Our highest good is not this life, but error is our greatest evil."

heirs of a life more noble and more worthy of possession. We cross the threshold of things transitory to set our feet on the everlasting. We may truly say that they who live most fully are they who best know sacrifice, renunciation, and even contempt for life. The greatest truth of history is that humanity lives by the suffering, the sacrifice, and death of its worthiest offspring. How true is the saying that they who live most in history are the dead! Life is not the bread we eat, the air we breathe, the blood which flows in our veins. All this is but the outer shell, — the fragile skiff which bears us to the realms of beauty, truth, justice, and strength. They who have reached these realms may well say *Nunc dimittis*. The same Preacher who found the world so old, considered that a living dog is better than a dead lion. In no book in the world can be found a more wonderfully apt motto for realism. Believe exactly the opposite, young friend, you who are just setting your feet on the ladder of life. A dead lion is better in itself alone than all the dogs living! Fill your soul with this truth. You can then forge for yourself an ideal.

* * *

The ideal is not a world of the imagination far off in inaccessible clouds, and so different from the real world that it is hopeless ever to attain it. The ideal is the living representation of the realities whose germs we bear. In the germs of plants and of animals we can recognize with the microscope certain delicate and hardly apparent forms, which mark the starting-point of future organisms. There is thus shown in man, such

as he is, that which he ought to become if he obey his destiny and that volition which is the basis of life. To be alive in every part of our being, to realize the possibilities that are in us, to do all that we can, to become all that we are capable of becoming, — this is the aim of life. This is our share; the rest is not in our hands. *Fac tua, sua Deus faciet.*

The ideal of a human being should be modestly limited to human nature. There is, we may be sure, a grandeur in this humility. If the seed cast in earth were conscious, it would dream, under the dark furrows, of a beautiful golden field where thousands of heads turned toward the sun; if the egg, inert as a stone, could imagine the latent forces within it, its ideal would be a free bird beating with its pinions the vast fields of azure. Let man then in his youth examine himself, know himself, come face to face with himself, and humanity will appear to him in all its sublime beauty. The road which he should follow will be indicated by his very nature, by his joys and sorrows, by all that he is and by all that he experiences.

* * *

In an epoch like ours, which has suffered such objective and subjective dispersion and division, we must aspire to harmony and unity. The lack of equilibrium is the great individual and social evil. To seek equilibrium within and without us should, then, be the watchword in a general orientation.

Man is first of all an individual. To say that the individual is nothing is as false as to say that it is every-

thing. The strength with which each one of us is bound to his personal life shows us that individuality is not an illusion. At every instant of our life everything that we experience, pain or pleasure, tells us that we are alive, that we are an existence and a distinct existence. Nothing, therefore, is more justifiable than an anxiety for individual development. Each one of us in his youth seems to himself incomplete; his traits and his stature are still to be attained. It is in this that man's education consists.

Life, whether our outer or our inner life, is, in brief, made up of two parts, whose equilibrium is of the highest importance. These are receptivity and activity. Receptivity concerns the intelligence, the feelings, the influences of climate and place, and physical or moral nurture. It is the many-voiced instrument by which the world — all which is not ourselves — acts on us. Activity comprises movement, effort, work, every display of energy, every manifestation of our will. It is the response to the action without, — our personal reaction, our contribution to the vast domain of life.

* * *

What we have so far been able to prove, a little everywhere, is that we are leaving an epoch where, notwithstanding a colossal development of energy, man has developed in his receptivity rather than in his activity. Our education has culminated in instruction, and this in mental furniture rather than in culture and in development of originality. In practice, our search for happiness has aimed at the satisfaction which comes

from impressions or recreations, whether of the mind or the body, rather than that which comes from action.

This peculiarity must be widespread, because we have constant evidence of it. I read in a book of the Swedish poet Ibsen entitled *Ligue de la Jeunesse*: "The chief fault of our education is that we have planted our feet on what we know, instead of on that which is. We see to what this tends. We see, for instance, hundreds of capable men who lack equilibrium, whose sentiments and dispositions are entirely at variance with their acts."

We have relegated action and the will to the second place. Man is to be an intelligence, a brain, rather than a character. This shows itself in the psychological sciences, where all that relates to intelligence has been much more deeply examined than that which relates to the will. We are here face to face with a serious deficiency. Of what use are mind and intelligence when that regulator we call the will is absent? The will is the helmsman of the ship; when it wavers and is at a loss, fear shipwreck. Let youth pay special attention that the cultivation of personal energy, of activity, of physical and moral force, be an aim ardently pursued.

There are as many forms of activity as forms of receptivity. He who is introspective will have noticed that the world and men produce on him impressions of a physical, intellectual, moral, æsthetic, or religious nature, according as they act on this or that form of his impressibility. Though these different forms ought to have a common origin, it is impossible to confound them, or to substitute one for another without grave

error. One is not a real man unless one accords their value to each of the elements of one's whole being. All our religious and our moral sense have been neglected and despised. We begin to see that they are a part of our normal receptivity as much as our æsthetic sense, for example. To neglect them is to mutilate it; to deny them is to deny actual facts. The activity will feel their effects, receiving thus a new stimulus and new motives for action. The religious or the moral man obeys impulses of which they who neglect to cultivate in themselves the sense of the good and the sense of the divine are ignorant. I wish especially in what follows to call attention to this, for it is likely to be forgotten, and to insist on it, for it is of great importance. I shall not tarry to speak of instruction, of scientific research, of study properly so called, of a curriculum, — in short, of all the *ensemble* of intellectual or æsthetic culture. These things have been spoken of by specialists. I will rather devote myself to the education of the will, and to subjects connected with its discipline and exercise, as well as their counterparts, idleness and pleasure, where I have some ideas of my own to express. And I shall reserve the place of honour for religious sentiment.

* * *

Man is not an individual alone. The more he recognizes the innumerable ties that bind him to his ancestors and his contemporaries, the more fully does he realize that he is part of a whole. That which he has and that which he is, he owes in great measure to others. He is like a cord in a net, distinct, but inseparable from

the whole. Man is an integral part of society. Solidarity environs and pervades him to such an extent that he sees nothing else when his eyes are opened to this great fact. Then follows initiation into social life, and he rises by degrees to family ties, friendship, love, and patriotism. At this stage only is he a man.

We will devote the rest of this book to describing certain characteristics of this ideal, in order to show the richness of the life which aims at it.

CHAPTER IV.

ACTION.

Esto vir.

1. Discipline.

I HAVE so many reasons for wishing to preach action to youth that I despair of enumerating them. This is the first: Words are discredited. Far be it from me to scorn them; but the truth must be faced. Words, which are the chief bond among men, the great arm and the great tool of the mind, have lost their force, because they have been the instruments of falsehood. Every utterance is distrusted. Who can prove to us that it is sincere, or, if it is sincere, that it will continue so? Facile jugglers of words and thoughts have so perverted their meaning that we often talk to no purpose: words have lost their sense. We have heard so many systems and doctrines exposed that we are *blasé*. We are no longer interested. How, then, can we reveal what is in us, diffuse our ideas, and exercise that apostleship of truth and of the ideal which is the noblest need of those who have something at heart? I answer: By talking less and acting more. The Arabs despised a man who talked much, deducing from it that he thought little and was weak-minded. The man of weight with

them was he who was sparing of words. With us talk is in high favour. To have said or written a clever thing is an honour. The chevaliers of the pen and tongue are on a par with those of the sword and tool, and are often ranked higher. We are too intelligent to take them *au sérieux*. We see their blade of speech cutting a glittering circle in the air, but it does no execution. How many good sayings have been simply wasted! We must, then, find some other mode of expression. Charlatans have spoiled the trade for honest folk. We must put our soul less and less into books and addresses; it runs the risk of being buried there. Let us lay our hands to the clay, let us take the spade, the hammer, the goad, the whip, and in place of tracing characters on paper, let us grave them on living hearts. Instead of crying, "Forward! Fire!" let us be ourselves the first in the attack. The chief who rushes to the assault has no need to consider his style or to quote Cæsar; a cry, a gesture suffices, and the contagion of his example brings his regiment on his heels. Imitate him. When you know something beautiful, good, just, or right, do not say it; do it, and this, not for a day only, but with persistent patience. And when you see something iniquitous and bad, do not lose time in raising your hands to heaven and in arousing the indignation of others, using this, perhaps, afterward as a pretext to fold your arms. No, do you yourself seize the bull by the horns, and act personally. Help will come of itself.

But before performing any such action we must be convinced of the necessity of discipline. Any force, of whatever kind, can be compared to fire and water.

Whether it is good or bad, we cannot tell. All depends on discipline. It can be a devastating scourge or a healthful power according as it is cowardly or dominant. It can spend itself in total waste or in fruitful results, according as it is unruly and blundering, or docile and kept in hand.

Very different ideas are held about discipline; but they group themselves under two principal heads.

On the one hand, by discipline is meant the sum total of the means by which life is subdued and put, as a passive instrument, under the control of the will of another.

On the other hand, by discipline is meant the series of means by which we make life strong, mistress of itself, and by which we establish among its various forms of action an equilibrium which instead of bringing them into conflict harmonizes them. This second kind of discipline makes man his own master and governor, under the direction of that which is the aim of his whole life, and to which little by little he consecrates his entire being.

We do not propose to speak here of the first kind of discipline. It is not worthy of being a part of human education; it is inhuman. It uses the same methods as are used in training horses or in teaching dogs to retrieve. It is excellent for animals, but detestable for men. It is not discipline; it is breaking to harness. Such a system weakens the will, and makes man a thing. This kind of discipline, so far from realizing the aims of life, suppresses them. We must suffer and endure everything rather than accept it.

But we must have a care not to reject discipline in general, as often happens under pretence of liberty and the dignity of man. He who has no check, no law, no reverence, who does not know obedience, and who does not recognize the authority of the laws which underlie everything, and which conscience should reflect, descends lower than the brute. When certain disorders break out, of which our times have furnished examples, we are astonished at our longing that men who live thus should receive summary treatment. There are days and hours when the wickedness and shame of man seem so frightful that we are tempted to appeal to violence to bring them to order, or at least to hinder them from publishing their ignominy. But that would be to fall from Charybdis into Scylla.

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Discipline, in the good sense of the word, has always been necessary and salutary. Neither in the State nor in the army nor in the school nor in the family, has anything permanent been established without it. Discipline is to action what logic is to intelligence and what economy is to finance. It is necessary to have undergone it, and to be undergoing it unceasingly, if we would not fall into confusion, incoherence, and sterility. Unhappily, all the world do not seem to have thoroughly grasped this. There are many strong minds among youth who think they can dispense with details, and can reach the mountain top without the fatigue of climbing step by step. The lack of real discipline is one of the scourges of the times. We have,

on the one hand, license and lack of restraint ; on the other, the deadly rigidity of arbitrary systems. Few men know that voluntary obedience which is the mother of liberty. In it, nevertheless, is the secret of moral force.

I wish I could make every young man perceive the horrible state of depravity and misery into which those soft-hearted beings throw themselves who dread all manly control, who know not how to refuse nor resist anything, and who yield to the first wish, desire, or whim, or to the impulses and caprices of events and wills other than their own. I wish to make them perceive it, in order to awake the desire for a different life in the hearts of those who catch a glimpse of the abyss into which it is possible to fall. Perhaps it may make them desire salutary severity.

For though this severity seems formidable, its results are so beautiful. Action is such a good that we must prefer the lash of the whip which awakes it, to the caress which puts it to sleep. In spite of all, we appreciate its grandeur. Even weak, debased minds have a secret admiration for it. He who is in control of himself is like a lighthouse in the moral world.

Nothing so instantly recommends itself and is so imposing as strength of soul. When it passes, we feel that royalty has passed by, and something in the depths of our nature makes us wish to possess this royalty. The spectacle of debased wills fills us with disgust for others and ourselves. There are days and hours when the appreciation of universal worthlessness crushes us. The spectacle of virility, on the contrary, is consoling.

It is enough for its pure ray to have once shone into our conscience, for us never to forget it. "Many a day and under many a circumstance have I seen a man at work,—at some labour of courage, of pity, of truth,—and I have thought him so beautiful that I would have given everything to resemble him." How I wish that many of the youth of our day thought thus! Just as we delight to see a child sprightly, enterprising, contemptuous of pain, so we love to meet a young man whose ideal is to be strong and to fear nothing but a mean action. Such a one would surely wish discipline as a means of realizing his noble aspirations, and he would never despise its petty details. For it is with them that we must begin. Be sure of this,—that action, like all man's faculties, is subordinate to the laws of development. It may be cultivated like the intelligence, and, like it, rise from simple things to the most difficult. The progressive force of action has a great analogy in the school of war. The soldier is a man of discipline who knows how to endure and to fight, and is made ready by a series of exercises. Edgar Quinet has said that war is made up of two parts,—the human and the divine. The human part is the sum total of the material mechanism; the divine is the spirit that actuates the soldiers, and the cause for which they fight. In the noble battle for which man prepares himself it is the same. The mechanism here is the *ensemble* of methods by which we make supple and strong his weapon the will. From these methods we can deduce a single rule: In the details of life make it your aim to be active rather than passive.

Eating, drinking, sleeping, amusing oneself, working, — everything that one undertakes, can be done passively. We can be in bed because we ought to be there and because we need rest; we can also be there because we are simply lazy. Every one knows this. It is the same with all the acts of life, and nothing is more easily noticed.

Work, which seems to be action *par excellence*, can have a passive character which takes away nearly all its moral value. To work because one is forced by hunger or thirst is to be passive. It is our hunger, our thirst, which is the spring of action, and we only follow its suggestion.

Life demands the conquering in detail of the inevitable and of outside influences; of the desires, the appetites, the passions, and the force of inertia which is in every one of us.

How many human beings have lived and died without ever suspecting that the great business of human life is to live life, and not to allow themselves to be carried along and dominated by it! These are the things that must be taught young soldiers who wish to enter this school of war, — they must seize on life, they must keep a watch on it, and must strive to gain ground little by little on this passiveness which surprises and binds us, in spite of ourselves, when the guard within is sleeping. A good way to bring about that vigilant action which makes our life come little by little under the power of our reflective will is to strengthen it, generally, by every kind of virile exercise. Nothing is so effective in hardening it as a little trouble, privation, and

even suffering. As a rule, strong characters have lived in the very midst of the struggles and the difficulties of life. Events have furnished them a severe and salutary school. Let us follow the hint life gives us, and be hard on ourselves. Let us seek fatigue, exertion, all that stretches the muscles and solidifies the bones, all that makes more red the blood, all that exercises patience and endurance of whatever nature it may be. How one comes, under this *régime*, little by little and through daily practice, to lifting weights which inert hands cannot even move! Bodily vigour is one of the conditions of moral vigour. Montaigne has said: "To strengthen the soul we must strengthen the muscles." To him who aspires to self-government the sensation of physical weakness should be insupportable. He should feel the necessity of cherishing everything that is in him, body and mind alike, of developing it by constant care, and of burnishing it every day, as one does a precious weapon, that rust and dust may not tarnish it. When by reason of these masculine exercises man has become master of himself, as a good rider is of his steed, the human conditions of the struggle will have been fulfilled. He will then devote his attention to the divine, — to knowing the spirit which should animate him and the banner under which he carries arms in the fight. The important thing is that he shall serve but one master. That master is the will, which underlies everything. We assist it when we are actuated by the principles which it points out to us in the life of humanity. To enlarge life and to better it; to make it just, strong, pure, healthful, joyous; to love it and prove our love

by serving it, — that is his aim. But when one loves life in its divine essence and its integrity, must one not hate many things? This we will say: the result of discipline should be to form, to make flexible, and to reclaim our whole nature in such fashion that with all its energies it places itself, like a docile and valiant sword, at the service of the life it should love, to oppose and attack all the enemies it should hate, without truce and without mercy. Hatred of evil is the indispensable complement of the love of life. He who knows not how to hate, knows not how to love. He who said, "I love," and said it truly, said with the same breath, "I hate." These beautiful and mighty passions are the backbone of struggles. All the great friends of man have known them, because they are as enduring as the rocks on which one builds one's house or breaks one's head.

To love and hate with all that one is and all that one has, even to the point of sacrifice and death, is what constitutes the highest degree of virile discipline. Willing obedience, from humble beginnings and faithfulness in little things, has now become the highest liberty and the loftiest and purest pleasure.

A fig for cowardly and passive enjoyment which, after all, makes us effeminate, and leaves us unarmed and exposed to even the smallest attack! What a wretched happiness is this! True happiness is in action, in struggling. Oh, to live, to strive, to suffer, for what one loves and worships, — for justice, liberty, country; for those who are outraged and oppressed! Oh, to be a manly heart, a rampart, as the Greeks had it,

a breastwork that cannot be taken; to be able to say No as firmly as Yes, to have a word that can be depended on as surely as the sun-rising, to fall into step with the immortal phalanx who march to humanity's field of honour in a blaze of glory! Young friend, you who read this page, do you feel your blood on fire as you picture to yourself such a life? It can be yours; but to reach it you must have the courage and patience to be trained as by a master of fence.

2. Work.

Work is the peaceful and continuous form of action. Some one has said: "Work is life, idleness is death." If this be true, and I do not doubt it, death is preying upon us. "What!" some will say, "do you think we do not work enough? Others think we work too much." Let us explain. No century has worked as this one; but who has done the work? A few only. For one inventor, worn out by researches and vigils, how many are there who take their ease and profit by his labour! In business the work everywhere falls on certain shoulders. Others reap advantage without a thought for those who bear the burden of the day. The American Bellamy has happily compared life to a stage-coach. A part of mankind is harnessed to it, and drags the rest, who dispute for places inside. Work is misunderstood and, indeed, despised by too many persons. It is everywhere considered as a drudgery to which one submits to gain one's bread. He who has bread, has no need to

work ; he who has not, works from necessity. Both of them act from unworthy motives. I recognize two classes of idlers, — those who are lazy, and those who grumble at their tasks. We must, then, rehabilitate work. How shall it be done ? By all of us working without exception. Granted that work is a law of life, we cannot admit that any one, under any pretext, shall be exempt. Whoever does not work is doomed, by the very spirit of this supreme law, to perish. He perishes from internal atrophy, destroyed by his imprisoned energy which turns to poison. All that does not rouse, does not set him to work, rusts and taints him. You have no work, young man ? That is enough ! I would rather hear that you had the cholera, because that kills and does not contaminate the body. The disease of laziness which is preying on you destroys the whole man. You are not only infected yourself, you become a centre of infection. In a well-organized society, the man stricken with your disease should be condemned to death, — a death of public shame, a death by starvation. There is no place, in a world under the rule of labour and solidarity, for him who has bread in abundance and lives idly on the work of others, or for him who has no bread but is lazy and begs or steals it, no matter how. He falls from the tree like the dead leaf.

Let us who love work and understand how good and salutary it is, who realize that it is a great deliverer and a great peacemaker, never conceal it. It is one of the elegances of this age of labour to do so. In our cities the shop-windows are dazzling to see, the factories are out of sight. We have results, but not the toil that

produced them. How pernicious this for youth and for every one ! Not to know the pains things have cost — not to see the pale little hand which made this fine lace, and the grimy fist which forged this gearing and these machines — is to be led into error and to be liable to injustice. We shall come to believe that things almost make themselves. Let us show our work ; it is a social necessity, a homage to truth. Let us do more ; let us honour it in our own person, that youth may honour it the more. We can never exalt it enough. Do not hide your hands when they show signs of toil ; it would be cowardly. See how the evil is spreading ! Do not add to its shamelessness your false shame. Why brush away so carefully this dust of labour ? It honours you. Never is the soldier finer than when he is black with smoke. What is the full dress of parade to the wild disorder of battle ? Old Diogenes, whom no one understands and whom the epithet "cynic" describes so badly, was a great practical philosopher and instructor. He taught the young students who came to him for advice, among other things, to oppose a stupid public prejudice by going about with burdens, tools, and other implements of labour. Why is he not among us still to teach these rude precepts to certain young lordlings, who are little troubled at being seen in bad company, but would blush to be caught at some unpretending and honourable work ?

Most absurd habits and the falsest ideas are every day taught our youth of both sexes by this way of concealing work. You excuse yourself, madame, when I surprise you with your hands in the dough, or busy

in the care of your children. Your embarrassment is complimentary neither to yourself nor to me. Shall we be of those who despise labour? What can be better than to cook, or to keep house, or to care for children? A mother is never so touching as when at her post. What a beautiful example she offers youth! We must not exaggerate, indeed; we must not deliberately blacken our hands and face. Virtue itself is estimable only through its tact and its discretion. But we understand one another, do we not? We hear it often said, nowadays, that young people do not wish to work; and those who say it are the direct authors of the inertia they complain of. In making themselves their children's servants and sparing them all exertion, have they not themselves taught them idleness?

Now that we are speaking of manual labour, let us devote special attention to this much neglected form of activity. I recognize in its rehabilitation one of those curative agents which is to redeem our epoch. First and foremost, that equilibrium, lost by the exaggeration of intellectual speculations and by the exasperation of our receptive faculties, will be restored by an impetus in the direction of muscular activity. Muscular activity is a tonic; it relieves the mental strain, and brings about a certain equipoise in overworked bodies. From this point of view manual labour is a grand curative agent. It enriches the blood, increases the energy, keeps up good humour when there is any, and brings it back if it has taken flight. We live more gayly and more broadly when the body has its normal activity, and our ideas, far from being lost, are increased.

Sedentary study enervates and impairs our impressions and our ideas, diminishes the clearness of our conceptions, and leads to exaggerations and eccentricities. We cannot with impunity disregard the basis of life. We hold the pen better, and we are better fitted for work after we have planed, sawed, filed, and hammered, because nothing makes the brain so active and is such an originator of ideas as moderate physical exercise. Besides, in bringing us nearer real life, nearer the things which one sees and touches, and which are essentially practical, it furnishes in the depths of our being a valuable ballast which prevents our ideas from straying and being lost in space. How many politicians would have escaped the danger of hollow principles and the passion for useless legislation, had they learned through work the practical needs of the people?

But among all varieties of manual labour there is none to be compared, in its wonderful influence, with work in the fields. It is one of the least within the reach of students, except in vacations. Happy then is he who can fly to the fields, who owns a bit of well-known land, or has some relative or friend from whom he can ask initiation into country secrets. There is a spirit of the fields which lives in the furrows and in the harvests, in the hedges and in the meadows, — a spirit beneficent, full of repose, of sweet teachings, and of virile enthusiasm. Virgil understood it. Antiquity is impregnated with it. But it demands of each one his share of effort before it will reveal itself. Nature speaks to those who walk abroad, no doubt, for she is kind to all; but there are things she says to those

only who cultivate and study her, — those, in a word, who love her. I consider it the greatest misfortune for any grade of society to consummate a divorce from the soil, and to consider it as, unhappily, it is considered in our great cities in the midst of an artificial life, — so much mud. How true is the old myth of the giant Antæus regaining his strength every time he touched his mother earth, and only conquered when his adversary tore him violently from it. We must go back to the soil to gain renewed strength from its vigorous heart. Let tired youth, worn out with study, anæmic and enervated by the great city, take the key of the fields. Speak to the peasant; better yet, ask him for work. Drive his plough; handle his pick, his scythe. In a few days you will be astonished at the number of new things you have discovered. You will have learned the difficulty of raising the grain so many people eat unthankfully, and you will not be able thereafter to touch it without emotion, remembering that man has contributed his labour, and God his sun. He who ploughs the earth and sows the seed is the true symbol of humanity which sows and trusts. By the side of the labourer, should life have seemed to you unreal and full of vanity, you will say under your breath with the poet, —

*On sent à quel point il doit croire
À la fuite utile des jours.¹*

You will realize dimly the sacredness of labour and

¹ "We feel how deeply we must believe
In the useful flight of the days."

the serious depths of life, and you will see the last rays of an October sun, —

*Élargissant jusqu'aux étoiles
Le geste auguste du sèmeur!¹*

Do this, young man! Believe me, I have tried it before advising it. I have cut more than one field of oats and wheat, cradled for long hours under the August sky to the slow cadence of the blade as it swung to and fro, laying low at every stroke the heavy yellow heads. I have heard the quail whistle in the distant fields beyond the golden waves of wheat and the woods that looked blue above the vines. I have thought of the clamours of mankind, of the oven-like cities, of the problems which perplex the age, and my insight has grown clearer. Yes, I am positive that one of the great curatives of our evils, our maladies social, moral, and intellectual, would be a return to the soil, a rehabilitation of the work of the fields. I cannot refrain from citing here a page from my friend T. Fallot's *Idées d'un rural*, and I commend them to young men in general, but especially to those whom an erroneous conception of life has induced to abandon the cultivation of their lands, and thus set a baleful example: —

"The educated classes should set the fashion of a return to the country and to the soil. They have done the mischief; they should repair it.

"Is it not they who taught the peasant the fetichism of the city, and all that goes with it, — cheap goods

¹ "Exalting even to the stars
The august gesture of the sower."

and cheap ideas? Is it not they who have spread the cult of money got without labour, the thirst for corrupting pleasures which they taste there, and all the rest?

"After having taken away from the peasant respect for the soil and the labour which tills it, it will not be easy to restore this; nevertheless, cost what it may, he must be made to understand that there is no existence preferable to his. Otherwise the depletion of the country districts will continue.

"Arguments take slight hold of the agriculturist; example alone makes him reflect. The day he sees families in easy circumstances and educated men living and working beside him, Jacques Bonhomme will come to understand that he has been thoroughly deceived in the assurance that there are more gold pieces to be got in the city than there are stones in his vineyard, and, roused by this discovery, he will set joyfully to work to open his soil to God's free sun and make it produce its fruits.

"Let me not be misunderstood: it is neither an act of sacrifice nor a crusade that I am preaching to educated men; it is a perfectly reasonable undertaking, from which they will be the first to benefit.

"Though the worthy corporation of pharmacists should draw up prescription after prescription, and compound pill after pill, they would never find a restorative like that which tilling the soil offers man."

The ancients were wiser than we in apprenticing their children to some handicraft, whatever might be their social condition. This kind of practical education is the indispensable complement of all virile culture.

Manual labour, in my opinion, has another advantage besides those I have mentioned. It is a means of bringing the different classes of society together. So long as work is despised by the educated and well-to-do of a nation, it is a source of misunderstanding and ill-feeling. Notwithstanding all the protestations and all the testimonials in honour of those we call workers, they believe that their work is, after all, a slavery, to which no one would willingly submit. It is but a step from this to hatred of manual labour. The mental work which is usually done under outward circumstances of nicety and comfort, the people readily depreciate, or see in it only an agreeable pastime or idleness in disguise. It is not easy for him who bears the heat of the sun, the inclemencies of the weather, or the foul air of the mines, to believe that one can suffer, struggle, be weary, carry heavy burdens, and climb rugged paths, while sitting quietly in a chair in the shade.

The misunderstandings which result from this state of things are grave obstacles to social progress. To lessen them the educated classes must familiarize themselves with the work of the other classes, and take the first steps toward the rehabilitation of the humbler forms of labour.

Work, at the moment, has become simply a means of procuring food, and even pleasure, luxury, or reputation. We have made it play a subordinate part. Beautiful in its freedom like most human forces, it has acquired in slavery a succession of deformities. Like love and religion it is unrecognizable, because it has degenerated. We know work hardly otherwise than as

a commodity. Even mental work is undervalued and for sale. Who remembers now that labour is one of the purest sources of happiness, and that it is never so holy as when it is disinterested. Of all the means man has to bring himself in touch with the bases of things, — truth, justice, all that is venerable and permanent, — there is none so good as labour. To establish between ourselves and that great mystery, life, the contact which shall communicate the vivifying electric shock, it seems as if we must lay our hands to some useful tool. It is in toiling, in losing himself in his loved work, that man feels himself akin to the Eternal Worker. Work is the great liberator, the peacemaker, the consoler *par excellence*; but to know it fully we must remember that it sometimes calls itself suffering.

3. Suffering.

A word is worth no more to jugglers with words than a *sou* is to a speculator. Both appropriate the result of others' labours by the wholesale. But he who gains his money by the sweat of his brow knows its true value; he sees what it costs. It is the same with words. What has not their making cost, — these words which one man parades like so many tinsel adornments, and which are as great an embarrassment to another as his uniform is to a performing dog? Words are long histories condensed; they are the whole flora of life and thought grouped in a single bouquet. Take this word *labor*, which means both work and suffering. It is a whole system of philosophy and of morality. It

unites in one and the same thought the creative activity of man, and that law of toil and suffering to which we are all subject. Does not the word indicate that suffering is wedded to toil in the long, slow evolution of mankind, and that this evolution is like childbirth, a dolorous travail. It is with this that a young man should be thoroughly impressed, that he may form a correct idea of suffering, and that he may not only seek that form of activity which gives happiness and pleasure and which brightens one's whole being with the delight of creating, but may also accept laborious effort and transform into activity, in the free acceptance of the word, even passive suffering.

Man rebels at suffering and pain. His nature demands that he should. Pain preserves him by warning him. When he goes astray, it springs up to tell him of it. It is, then, natural that we should seek that which enlarges life and adds to its enjoyments, and that we should shun that which narrows it and makes it suffer. Even for this are we not indebted to pain?

*L'homme est un apprenti, la douleur est son maître ;
Et nul ne se connaît avant d'avoir souffert.¹*

Pain does not alone fill for us the negative office of one who cries "Beware" in dangerous places; it makes us mindful of ourselves, it reveals us to ourselves. How many things a man sees clearly only through tears? And what tears are more sincere, more touch-

¹ Man is an apprentice, pain is his master;
And no one knows himself till he has suffered.

A. DE MUSSET.

ing, than those of youth? When its fresh, generous, susceptible heart comes into contact with rough and often pitiless life, how it suffers! What an experience it goes through! The youth of this harsh and positive age has known it. We say to it: Love it, love this suffering which comes from the contact of life with your ideal. Take it into your inmost soul, and consider its slightest whisper. Wherever in the world you feel yourself bruised, wounded in some deep and true sentiment, opposed in some legitimate aspiration, have the courage of your suffering. Let it be the cry of alarm which arouses you to resistance, to combat, to a search for something better. You will then know pain as a deliverer. It forges arms from its chains. Through this holy grief of youth, oppressed and suffering from the injustice which the stronger inflict upon the weaker, learn to love justice better. Do not act like the new boys at certain schools who, when they are harassed by their elders, resolve to harass, in their turn, their juniors. Let sorrow teach you pity, and draw you nearer those who suffer and are distressed, — the weak, the people, all who are forgotten. Then it will unveil grand and hidden things to you. But it will do more for you still. It will bring you into touch with the dead, as it has with the living. The great sufferings of history will no longer be unintelligible to you. You will be in communication, through sacrifice and sorrow, with those who have lived before you. Humanity, which they who know it not and do nothing for it despise, will seem to you beautiful because of all it has suffered, and you will love it the more. You will cling to it, as

children cling to their mothers, in tears, and it will teach you the secret of power, of hope, of faith, which is revealed in the sanctuary of great sorrows. Do not fear that your youth will lose its gayety. Suffering, like work, strengthens the capacity for happiness. It sees on the steep paths which it makes you climb, sweet smiling flowers which the profane have never known.

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Suffering is, besides, a spur, a powerful spring of action. Too easy an existence enervates; an effeminate youth is a bad preparation for life. It is a good thing to bear the yoke when one is young. The burden of happy days is very heavy to withstand before experience comes to our aid. Let us rather desire a little trouble; it is more salutary. It hardens the will, toughens the skin, and prepares for liberty. Then it is more manly, more in conformity with what a young man should wish, — that is, a being who is young and who wishes to become a man. Take the best men of the present and of the past. They have all endured hardship, and they boast of it. After all, these things are interesting to tell in after days. *Meminisse juvat*. Doubtless a good bed and a good table are not to be despised. Let us not despise anything; let us rather improve every opportunity for enjoyment. But these are not the things that grave themselves most deeply in our memory. We recall more willingly the days when we have been hungry and have slept on a hard bed, even perhaps beneath the stars. I do not wish any one to undergo hunger or cold, — in short, to

suffer ; but a little trouble and hardship are as salt for youth.

This is why we should be thankful if we were born in modest circumstances, and, when this is not the case, should seek simplicity in tastes and needs. I could wish that there were a greater number of rich young men enamoured of labour, exertion, privation, of voluntary poverty even ; and fewer young men of humble origin ashamed of their lot and of their condition, — always sedulous to appear better off than they are, and spending on their superfluities what their parents actually need.

In conclusion, I consider that suffering is a friend, that we must pay it royal honours, that we must be thoroughly persuaded that without it humanity would have remained in barbarism, and that the highest progress is due to it.

Every young man with a heart should respect it, should venerate it above no matter what greatness, should love it, and should kiss its blood-stained footsteps in the dust.

4. Meditation and Rest.

They who are thinking of leaving well-worn paths must create for themselves a strong inner life. To recognize constantly a right and impartial line of action, they must escape from time to time from outside anxieties, from the sway of tendencies and parties, and from the discordant clamour which rends the air about them. I claim a large share of the life of our youth

for meditation. Where to find it is the question. The other day in walking through one of those fair-grounds where, with the perfected apparatus of modern civilization, such a lovely uproar is created, I saw this : A young man, with curly locks and fine features, a member doubtless of some family of strollers, who had returned to the paternal van for his vacation, was sitting on a camp-stool, his elbows on his knees, his thumbs in his ears, his eyes deep in a book. At his right a juggler was shouting, at his left a man was playing a trombone, a big drum was beating its loudest, a number of organs were playing different airs at the same time, accompanied by the deafening notes of calliopes. Dogs were barking ; passers-by were singing, shouting, quarrelling ; the young man alone was imperturbable. I watched him for a long time. He seemed to me at the moment a symbol. If we wish to collect our thoughts, nowadays, we must do as he did. Let us imitate this brave lad, who by force of will created silence in the midst of uproar. We must acknowledge that his power of concentration is not given to every one. Still we can perhaps acquire it, if we realize the value of meditation. But, as a rule, we dread it rather than seek it. Every man as he leaves his lecture, his office, his laboratory, his workshop, thinks it his duty to take measures against the danger he runs in remaining *tête-à-tête* with himself.

Those who heard John the Baptist, moved by his words, demanded of him, " What shall we do to escape the wrath to come ? " Their question reminds me by analogy of that of a host of our contemporaries : " What

shall we do, what shall we take up, to escape ourselves?" Are they afraid of being in bad company, when they are with their own selves alone? One would say so. They prefer the least interesting and the most harmful companions to solitude. Some would rather pay to be bored in a crowd, than to be bored by themselves without expense. Nothing is more interesting than to notice all the contrivances, all the ingenious trickery made use of in this struggle against meditation. We insure ourselves against it as against hail or fire. Is not the *sou* the poor man spends for a paper, of which he reads only the serial, an insurance premium? There are provident people, as you know, who always carry salts with them in case of indisposition. There are some even who carry a whole pharmacy: it is more prudent. For a different purpose, others have always about them a newspaper, a novel, a game of cards or solitaire. As soon as there is an instant when they run the risk of reflection or introspection, quick! out comes their preventive. They read the financial bulletin or some chance article, or work out a game of solitaire,—the danger is averted; and what a danger!—they barely escaped reflection. It is the fear of introspection carried to absurdity.

The result is that many men become strangers to themselves. All the intensity of life is on the surface. Channing said: "Multitudes of men live and die as complete strangers to themselves as are to us lands which are barely known by name, and which no human foot has trod." At certain stages of history meditation in solitude has made believers lose their con-

nection with the world, because it has turned their attention entirely to introspection. What is now lost is the way into our own hearts. We have been very wrong to neglect this way. We hear in the silence of its forgotten windings strong, sweet voices to which our ears had grown unused.

The solitude from which we fly is a good thing, and meditation is salutary. There must be halting-places in life. *Sit thou silent*, says Isaiah; and it is wise often so to do.

You will say that what I propose is in contradiction with the action which I showed to be one of the essential characteristics of the new ideal. Not at all. The source of rational and assured action is in meditation.

In what does the energy of the will and the strength and security of conscience consist? In the ability to be self-reliant, to resist outside encroachments, and to strengthen oneself against them by an active inner life. To give oneself to reflection is not to fly the world and grow effeminate in unwholesome isolation or in sterile contemplation of self. If this were so, we would say *Væ soli!* To give oneself to reflection is to forge and furbish arms, that we may wear them in battle with renewed strength. It is to fall back a step that we may leap further forward.

Accompanying all great outward activity must be an intense inner life. Wherever this is lacking, activity degenerates into agitation. Retirement, solitude, the desert, have played their *rôle* in all fruitful lives.

Wherever there rises in the world a voice that can

awake response, it comes from a mouth that knows how to be silent. The hidden source of moving words and heroic acts is in the soul's great silences. All our energies concentrate and make ready in meditation, and when the time comes, break forth with active enthusiasm. We might say that the mind, like the earth, has its long winters when all is still and asleep, its springtimes with awaking and growth, and then its harvests. There is here a law which one cannot oppose without running against the impossible. It is true of the study and digestion of another's knowledge which must sink in and be assimilated. It is true, above all, of individual production. All mental workers should remember it, if they would not create ephemera without ability or force. The curse of avocations which compel men to write or speak at a fixed time, is that they create artificial production. The younger one is, the worse this is for him. When we are too hard pressed, we no longer work; we fabricate. I would always urge a young man who is concerned for his individuality to produce without haste. He had better let his ink dry and his pen rust than use them to lay immature thoughts before the world. The same is true of actions. Outward action must not precede inner action. All that is premature is false and unenduring. Whence come the especial virtue, the immortal beauty, of those classic masterpieces which we know as poesy, painting, or sculpture? In good measure from the patient travail of a work born in due season, without feverishness or artificial aid. How much poor work we do, because we do not appreciate the strength of meditation, nor the

secret of taking time to draw the bow to its utmost, that the arrow may fly farther!

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Meditation is still further a force, because it assures the unity of life. Is it a rider who goes whither his horse wills? No; it is not. Those who cannot relive their past, review it, and establish a unity of aspirations, are like those aimless riders who let themselves be carried here or there at the caprice of their steed. Without knowing it, they obey a thousand outside impressions, and are swayed by events. They are not individualities; they are results.

To escape this unworthy servitude, wherein so many men are induced to undo one day what they did the day before, and to lose all the fruits of life, there is but one way,—it is meditation. Youth must review its childhood; man his youth. The noblest among us, both of youth and of ripe age, are they who do this. What a beautiful life is that in which, despite all outside changes, there is formed little by little in the heart a bond of confidence between its different periods; where youth has retained *naïveté*, middle age exaltation and enthusiasm, old age confidence and serenity, and where these lives summed up in one unite in saying, "We will so continue." A wretched existence, on the other hand, is that where we see ourselves wandering through a dead past like a stranger, who says, sings, and loves things outside our comprehension. Woe to the people who forget their history, the men who forget their past!

King Ahasuerus had no sooner begun to hear the recital of his reign than he found many wrongs to right. Let us allow that impartial chronicler whom we call conscience to decipher from the tablets of vanished days what we then were, what we have suffered, accomplished, or neglected. Let us treat with respect that inner voice which cries to us with so much insistence and authority, *Sta, viator!*

Stop, pilgrim! halt, turn thy thoughts inward! Whether they make thee weep or smile, they are alike salutary. We always rise from meditation stronger and better, because more true to ourselves. A life without remembrance is a broken chain. The most valuable part of itself is lost; it is worthless. Of what use to labour, to struggle, to run and hurry, if we drop all into a gulf of oblivion. *Sta, viator!* Do not say you are in haste. Of what use is haste, when it leads to an abyss? He who does not draw off his moral balance-sheet nor relive his life, who performs his tasks and goes his way forgetting them as stupid birds forget their eggs in the sand, runs to certain ruin. When he expects it least, he will break his head against some rock of his own planting. No; there is neither satisfactory excuse nor pretext, nor is there any possible good reason to allege against the moral necessity of pausing and interrogating our conscience.

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The same necessity exists for him who wishes an intellectual life of any value. If you do not wish your intelligence to degenerate into incoherence, into

the most improbable medley of contrarities, you must sometimes stop, examine what you have done, and test its soundness. In a word, it is imperative to escape from outside clamour and from the suggestion of others' thoughts, to return to the unfashionable habit of thinking for oneself. Otherwise there will soon remain, as the fruit of an ill-ordered intellectual life, only a practically sterile existence. Actions destroy one another, like thoughts.

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What shall we say of religious belief? Can we still give that name to the bizarre and heterogeneous collection of fragments, new and old, of every kind, which so often constitute the structure of our religious conceptions? Heedlessness alone seems to have designed this tottering edifice, this shelter which is to protect us. Here, more than anywhere, must there be silence and reflection. Young believers, ask yourselves what you believe, and if you really and personally believe it. Is your faith a living one, a part of your very blood and substance, or is it only an amalgamation of unrelated principles which encumber your inner life? It is so hard to see one's most absolute beliefs resolve into smoke, and one's most ardent assurances give place at the critical moment to fear and uncertainty. To avoid the frightful solitude in those supreme encounters where borrowed beliefs fall into dust at the shock of trial, we must often withdraw into silence. There, in the presence of God alone and of reality, faith purifies and strengthens itself, as it becomes more simple and more true. It brushes aside the dross which routine and

man's fears mingle with it for our undoing, and we leave that austere school where holy truth disciplines us, with a firmer heart.

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I will not stop at urging meditation, I will preach also rest. Do not laugh. If there are those who loaf too much, there are also those who do not loaf enough. Nothing is gained by working too hard. Close the book, put out the lamp,

Et jam tempus equum fumantia solvere colla.

You have no time to lose, you say? To rest is to gain time, not to lose it. You will work much better after it. There is a limit to all things: overwork ends in stupefaction. I appeal to all those who have passed examinations in evidence. For my part, I am in favour of rest.

On a summer's day when, as a tourist, one has tramped in the blazing sunshine over long dusty highways and up steep paths where stones have hurt the feet, how good it is to throw down the pack and staff, and sit in the shade! This is the most enjoyable part of these excursions. "The thought of a laggard this," you will exclaim, "the precepts of him who amid the beauties of Nature prefers a mossy pillow, and willingly leaves to others the glory of great exertion and painful climbs. It recalls the famous *Suave mari magno* of Lucretius." Not the least in the world. The thought is inspired by necessity itself, by the laws inherent in human affairs. He who knows not how to halt, knows not how to march, or to profit by his

marches. He must sometimes sit down, look behind and before him, recall and foresee, consider his strength and his time, and listen to that which the blades of grass, the ants, the birds, say to the traveller as he pauses for an instant. He must sit down to perceive, through the sounds and forms of things which pass, the voice of God and the whisper of the soul.

He who cannot thus pause will carry away but little from his walks, though they reach around the world. It is the same with life. To estimate it, to appreciate it, to enjoy it, to get its meaning, we must sometimes sit on its banks and watch it flow by us. The best parts of life, and the most useful, are these halts. When we are harassed in body or mind, — when back, brain, or heart is weary, — it is always good to remember that one is neither a slave nor a beast of burden. Fatigue obscures our physical and moral vision. According as we are perplexed and lassitude or fever takes hold of us, does a clear insight escape us. Our task seems the more difficult when we are exasperated and persist in it. Like burdens which, at first light, seem heavier as one bears them, and end by becoming insupportable, uninterrupted work turns into drudgery. Then come terrible moments when we feel ourselves among inextricable difficulties, and beat our heads against insurmountable obstacles. This is as true of physical as of mental labour. Both are, after all, the application of the same energy in a single direction. This energy increases with moderate exercise, but is disheartened and weakened by excess of it. Demoralization easily seizes him whom undue labour

has exhausted. We might say that it lies in wait for the worker, to spring on him the moment he bends beneath his burden.

As far as we can, then, we must take measures to give ourselves a respite, before it is too late. The right to rest is among the most sacred of the rights of man. He who does not enjoy it, who hinders others from enjoying it, sins against humanity. As soon as regular periods of rest and reflection are introduced into one's life, the whole being is renewed. Man at rest is like one undergoing a cure. His moral being has a change of place and air. He considers everything from a different point of view. He looks as a spectator on the field where he is working, and regarding it from a more distant and a higher plane, understands better his task. While at his work he saw but its details; now he sees its entirety and its environment. He sees the lives and work of others as they affect his personal activity. He establishes comparisons and learns lessons. All this will help him when he takes his accustomed place. But, above all, in rest he experiences true pleasure. Fatigue is a disease of which rest is the cure, and the happiest of mortals are its convalescents. The contrasts they feel in escaping the powers of death and destruction and in being reborn into life, are for them a source of infinite enjoyment such as no one else can fancy. If the slothful but knew what the worker enjoys in rest, they would set to work without question. The years of idleness given to that which it is agreed to call pleasure, are not worth an hour of the repose of real workers. It is for them that God unveils, when they

take their ease, a whole world of beauty and richness which no one else can know. He says to them in his twilights and setting suns, and in the healing silence of compassionate night, eternal truths which can be heard only when one has borne the heat and burden of the day.

CHAPTER V.

ENJOYMENT.

Wer nicht lieb Wein, Weib, und Gesang,
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Leben lang.

LUTHER.

Live joyously!

RABELAIS.

Be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.

JESUS.

Xaïpe! (Greek salutation.)

1. Pleasures and Distractions.

THERE are three classes of individuals who disapprove of pleasure. There are, doubtless, more than three, but to enumerate them all would be to do them too much honour. It would be as dreary as a succession of rainy days. Three will suffice,—utilitarians, ascetics, and pessimists.

The first proscribe pleasure because it is useless and, according to them, makes us lose time without any equivalent. Their reason is final, as you see.

The second condemn it because it is dangerous, in their eyes, and jeopardizes their salvation. There has existed, from time immemorial, a wide-spread conception of religion wherein sombre hues predominate. God himself is joyless; and man must sacrifice to this gloomy majesty enthroned in the midst of eternal

silence his joy and his poor fleeting smile, lest he should offend Him who never smiles.

Pessimists, finally, deny pleasure because it deranges their system. It is always so. In philosophy when anything embarrasses you or does not frame in with your little theory, it must be suppressed. As I have to speak on a subject so thoroughly disapproved by such weighty authorities, I do not care to stand alone and have sought support. I have cited at the head of this chapter the words of several persons whom I consider sufficiently well known and of sufficient standing to sustain my views. I have added to theirs a word which is not the expression of any one man, but which incarnates the whole soul of a people,—*χαίρε*, the Greek salutation. It recalls the good old exclamation of our fathers, *gai*. It is therefore with a good conscience and in good company that I enter on this field. I propose to treat, first, of pleasure and distractions, and then, descending to depths more profound, of joy in the abstract.

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As we are speaking of pleasures and distractions, it is proper to point out their origin. Just as it is not correct to say that priests invented religion, doctors disease, cooks hunger, and vinedressers thirst; so it is absurd to imagine that distractions have been invented by mountebanks, jugglers, and "artists" of every kind, whose bread is won by amusing others, but who often do as ill service to their vocation as do bad priests, charlatans, and dealers in adulterated food products. The origin of distractions is to be sought in a very real and very

legitimate need, the need of diversion. Rest alone is not enough. It hardly satisfies the brute. Animals themselves, especially the higher animals, have their plays and their amusements. How much more does man need them, especially the young man! We are so constituted that the continual repetition of impressions, even though they are agreeable, enervates and wearies us. How must it be then with those severe tasks, those absorbing occupations, which use up in time the most robust strength. Youth becomes deformed and weary much sooner than middle age. The student, the young workman, the young *employé* who have never or only too rarely a chance for diversion, will not be slow to suffer from its lack. Their lot is that of the slave.

If, then, pleasure is a necessity and even a duty, if diversion sustains and renews us notwithstanding its detractors, it is worthy of our serious attention. We have to deal here, not with a secondary and unimportant phenomenon, but with one of the most active factors of life. The question of the employment of our leisure and of the nature of our pleasures is a vital one. The means of distraction, indeed, are infinitely varied, and while some are salutary others are pernicious. To a certain extent the outcome of man's entire activity depends on how he employs his leisure. Wholesome amusements make him better and strengthen him; unwholesome amusements ruin the individual, and become an agent in the dissolution of society.

It is not enough to know how to work, we must know how to amuse ourselves. We admit, without qualification, that our age is not one of those which

have known how to give true and substantial satisfaction and a right direction to man's inborn need for diversion and relaxation. The age is a devotee of pleasure; it has invented amusements and distractions which our fathers never knew; but one is strictly within the truth in saying that it does not know how to amuse itself. The art has been lost, the recipe forgotten, like that of Greek fire and Roman cement. The history of leisure and of its employment is very instructive and very interesting, although the materials for many parts of it are difficult to get together. There are, however, certain principles which are met with everywhere. In the youth of any people the means for healthful diversion and for virile pleasures are in keeping with their strength, their virtue, and their power of expansion. Such are racing, gymnastics, swimming, wrestling, outdoor sports, everything that stirs the blood and makes the body supple, everything that increases the joy of living. In the old age of any people unmanly amusements, excessive and often shameful pleasures which gratify the senses, stupefy the body, and encourage idleness, are in keeping with their decadence and decrepitude. Indoor life succeeds out-of-door life. We notice this evolution among the ancients. The Greeks of the decadence abandoned the salutary and manly practice of wrestling, wherein their ancestors were distinguished and to which they were devoted, for wine, play, and corrupting pleasures. The young Romans of the time of the Empire could not even lift the discs which their ancestors' vigorous arms had hurled.

But as a general rule and despite the alternations of

greatness and decadence in nations from ancient to modern times, there is an increasing tendency toward sedentary amusements.

Relaxations which take the form of bodily exercise steadily decrease. In the Middle Ages the influence of the Church and of asceticism, it is true, makes itself strongly felt. The body is despised, as of no importance or as a clog upon the soul. To weaken and neglect it as much as possible is the prevailing ideal. But the injury which asceticism does a part of society by its contempt for bodily exercise, and even for amusement in general, which it considers wicked, is counterbalanced by the influence of chivalry, where the entire education is based on vigorous physical development. One extreme corrects the other.

The people themselves and their youth, although very unhappy, preserve, even during the darkest ages, that desire for happiness which betrays itself in amusements often uproarious, in eccentricities and in follies. There are many out-of-door sports. As we approach the Renaissance, a more healthful teaching, and one inspired by a different conception of life, gives to amusement a place even in education. Games and sports are rehabilitated in the eyes of thinkers. Take Rabelais and Montaigne, for instance. Their ideas echo the views not only of an *élite*, they reflect those of their entire epoch. The Reformation too is a rehabilitation of enjoyment in the great department of morals. The rigours of Calvin at Geneva are rather a necessary protest, an indispensable means of suppressing libertinism, than a condemnation of enjoyment. We must read Luther,

must see him live and hear him sing, hear him draw up his indictment against melancholy and his apology for light-heartedness, — naming the first a vice, a kind of squalor of the soul, the second a virtue, — if we would understand the position of the Reformation on this subject. In the seventeenth century there is everywhere an entire reaction. A factitious, an artificial, life is now in the ascendant, — a life of the *salons* and the court, coincident with an epoch of rigid dogmatism, nearly without precedent, and with long-continued national calamities. Joy then underwent an eclipse easy to understand. The time to weep comes oftener to the people than the time to laugh. But let us hasten on to our own times. A single glance at our amusements compared, as a whole, with those of the past, is enough to show that they assume more and more of a sedentary character. The tendency can be seen in all strata of society. When we think of the secluded life of mental workers or of the toiling populace of our great cities, we cannot but deplore this state of things, — the rather that these sedentary amusements, of whatever kind they are, from the most innocent to the most depraving, have the disadvantage that they excite the nervous system. To quiet a brain overwrought by feverish labour, we have, more than ever, need of air, of movement, of healthful physical exercise, to repair in part the injury inflicted by bad air and by the cramped and homicidal attitudes of the workshop, the office, or the school. And what do we do? We go to a play, in places where smoking, drinking, and gambling are going on; or we read — and it is of the majority I speak — something

as exciting as possible. The dose of emotion which is administered in certain kinds of literature and some plays, is that needed for flabby nerves which must be excited artificially to make them vibrate anew. It is galvanizing. Even reading, excellent in character though it be, is fatal when it monopolizes the best part of our leisure. We need an entire change. In saying this I include the whole world without exception. But it is the youth of the lower classes which excites my pity, because it does itself so much harm. When, worn out, harassed, enfeebled, it thirsts for a little relaxation, happiness, or forgetfulness, there are open to it only injurious distractions and poisonous pleasures, — alcohol, licentiousness, bad literature. We are here face to face with a very serious evil, and one which among its other grievous results for morality, the public health, and the peace of society, has this, more to be regretted than the others, — it is killing joyousness. What are life and youth without it? If we pollute its source, you might thereafter offer us the world and all that it contains, but it would not repair the wrong. Without joyousness all is hollow, insipid, dead.

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I have hailed with delight the renaissance of out-of-door sports, games of strength and of skill among students; and I pray that the tendency in this direction may increase daily, and may spread among the masses.

Youth cannot but be the gainer, both as respects its education in general and its happiness, by a reform in the employment of its leisure and the choice of its pleasures. There are a hundred ways of being happy,

and of diverting oneself royally, while at the same time restoring a lost equilibrium. What we need is a return to simplicity, to those healthful and vigorous influences which soothe, calm, and make us love life, instead of those artificial pleasures which engender a disgust for it.

There is one kind of enjoyment which is ever new, and which combines mental recreation with physical exercise, while it holds an inexhaustible fund of delightful surprises, — it is the long pedestrian trip, pack on back, across country. Young Frenchman, take the staff of the old companions of the tour of France, and like them measure, step by step, your native land with your own feet, that you may love it better for knowing it better. The first imbecile you meet can sleep on the railway; but what has he seen in his hundred leagues' run? Two or three *buffets*; that is all. This sort of thing ends in our knowing nothing of our native land. If youth were to acquire a liking for those long walking-trips made by ten or twelve light-hearted and sturdy comrades, what good it would do itself, while setting the best of examples. We must, at any cost, get out of ruts and recover our power of enjoyment. The forest with its strong fragrance, its voices, its strength, the mountain with its breezes and its vast horizons, the sea with its might and its poetry, are the nurses of youth. It is to them that it must go to gain strength and life.

*Wem Gott will rechte Gunst erweisen,
Den schickt er in die weite Welt!*

EICHENDORF.

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But I hasten to a matter which interests me especially; namely, singing. The decadence of singing among youth and among the masses is well known. I hope that it may spring up again, in the interests of happiness, of good living, and of public spirit. I dream of a renaissance of song among the people to which educated youth can contribute greatly. Whatever it sings the people repeats.

Make us a fine collection of student songs on all those subjects which stir the heart of man, let it be an echo from every corner of the land and of every period of our history, — a collection suited to the people, and one wherein sings the very soul of France. We need this because we must sing, and, in default of something better, we sing anything, no matter what. In our cities, even in the midst of all those discordant noises which conspire against man's ear and voice, the youth of the people finds a way to show its liking for song. I see young girls and lads gather in groups in the courts and squares, where they are safe from vehicles, and listen almost religiously to some guitar or violin player, who sings to his own accompaniment. Twenty times does he repeat the same refrain. Presently some know it and sing it with him. They buy the song, and go their way humming it over and over. Sometimes it is very improper, but not always; and I notice with infinite pleasure that they sing with very much more feeling and conviction certain excellent songs, poor in rhyme, but whose burden is love, suffering, and the affairs of humanity. Often, caught in the improvised circle of eager pupils of a chance professor,

and a witness of the ardent craving of the masses for song, have I understood better than anywhere else the void which the song as it dies on the lips leaves in the heart; and I have dreamed a dream as serious as it will seem to you eccentric. It is this:—

He who, as a new troubadour, traverses France with no matter what instrument, and teaches the people to sing of love, of joy, of grief, of death, of the fatherland, of Nature, of all that is old yet ever young, of all that lies sleeping in every heart and only asks to be awakened, will be a benefactor of humanity worthy to figure among the hosts of saints and martyrs. When we see this craving for song, so noble, so legitimate, and for the most part so illy satisfied, so unworthily led astray and taken advantage of, we feel both pity and indignation. O France, thou land of pleasant speech, who on the threshold of new epochs, in simple and harmonious strains didst teach the nations song, — land of love, of wine, of sunshine, — wilt thou see the melody poured from thy generous heart from age to age, silenced, and silenced before silly and pernicious rhymes? No, it shall never be! Thy old unconquered soul will sing again the old songs. The troubadour whom I await shall be thy youth, — thy whole youth.

Though I fain would not, yet I must speak on a very painful point, which I cannot avoid in considering this subject; namely, the discredit into which amusements have fallen through their abuse. There are, alas! many things, harmless in themselves, which we can hardly any longer permit, because of this. Such, for instance,

is dancing. What diversion is older and more charming? Dancing in the open air has so many excellent advantages for youth that it is a shame to see it become the monopoly of questionable assemblages. Oh the good old wedding-dances, where the most staid persons danced with the young and with the people! I have never seen anything like it in our day, except in some out-of-the-way corner, or occasionally on a night of the Fourteenth of July. And on one of those occasions so rarely met with, where men of all classes of society amuse themselves in happy unison, I have always experienced a peculiar emotion. It is so good to see joyousness pass like a sunbeam over all these faces wherein we can read so many different lots in life. But public manners have become such that a sight like this is now refused us. Except among intimates, where we are suffocated with heat and dust, dancing presents innumerable disadvantages which our grandfathers and our grandmothers never knew. It is the same with a host of good old customs. It is a sad thing to say, but as it is true, we must point it out, that we may organize against it: The world is given over to abuse, to that great murderer, that destroyer of right usage. When this wretch has poisoned the springs, the water of the very rocks is suspected of impurity. This is why uprightness of life and virtue have fled to neutral ground, and become that dull, washed-out thing which consists above everything in abstaining and sometimes in playing the fool in the desire to play an angel's part. After having disfigured humanity with vice, we distort virtue itself.

We know it only, so to speak, as depressing and even — say it we must — tiresome. From the standpoint of youth, this is a misfortune.

Who will give us back all those healthful, vigorous, and pleasing diversions in which the joy of living is incarnate, as are the sunbeams in flowers? Their elders can in this do much for youth. I exhort all serious persons—the aged, parents, teachers, the clergy of every denomination, whoever is interested in good things and in a normal life, whoever retains his sensibilities—to come to the rescue of youth. It is not right that we should have separate pleasures. The loveliest family parties are those where old age smiles at youth, and where every age is represented, from grandparents to children. Every stage of life is there then, and how beautiful in their contrasts! What is true of the family is true also of society in general.

Frederic Froebel used to say: "Let us live for our children." Let us borrow his motto. Let us live for youth, and it will live for the right, and its joy will be pure.

Our fathers delivered the holy land from the infidel. There is another holy land which brigands, thieves, the profane, pollute every day. It is the land of laughter and of pleasure. They have so thoroughly ravaged and disfigured it that it is not recognizable. But by the God of springtimes and of the stars, by the loving-kindness which gives the fresh laugh to the lips of childhood and the sweet intoxication to the heart of youth, this holy land shall not remain in the hands of infidels. It is ours, and we shall regain it.

2. Joyousness.

Amusements and the different kinds of pleasure are, after all, only an outward evidence. The pure wine which we pour into the glasses is joyousness. Just as the grape finds in the soil, the rain, and the sun those elements of its sap which ripen it, so joyousness is the matured fruit of a good life. It is won by the valiant and the brave. It is not to be had for the asking. Let us look a little into this truth. Youth has great need to be impressed with it.

The barometer rises and falls. The simple change of position of the mercury in a glass tube gives us valuable information, and furnishes us a number of facts as to the state of the atmosphere. Often in noting its markings, — rain, wind, tempest, calm, fine weather, settled weather, — I am surprised to find myself forgetting, of a sudden, the outer world and thinking of the world within, of the ceaseless change which characterizes it, which is reflected in our dispositions, and of which the immense diversity produces joyousness or depression. There also, according to the times and seasons, is rain or fine weather, calm or storm. There also the barometer rises and falls. All this individual detail we can observe in the life of society, on a larger and more striking scale. Life has its heights and its depths, its moments of buoyancy and of depression. All these moods manifest themselves in the heart or on the face by joy or sadness.

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There is a sadness which comes from a hard life, whether it be material or spiritual. It corresponds in man with that bleached colour which in plants tells of their lack of sunshine. This sadness is in the highest degree sympathetic to us. It is often salutary. But there is another which we must fight to the death, — it is the sadness of those who are tired of life; and still another which we must remedy by amending our ways, since it comes from bad living or bad thinking.

Away with these persons who are tired of life! They are but the spoiled children of existence. They barely put its cup to their lips; they but taste its bread, or even throw it away, and deem those who eat it with good appetite clowns. There are few indeed of them among ragpickers, miners, labourers, sailors, investigators, or workers, of every kind, who are exposed to wind and rain. They are recruited from those who sit over the fire and eat, and only work a little in the intervals between their meals. Their fatigue comes from dancing long at a ball, playing late at a club, or from killing time by reading novels. To recover from such exertions, they sleep the whole morning through. They are like night-birds; daylight hurts their eyes. By day they are simply washed-out rags. They want to be seen only in a blaze of gas or electric light. These precious pessimists, as they go through life, are bored mildly at everything. But they do not forsake this wretched and insipid existence. They have a mission which forbids it, — that of making others feel as they do. Those of them who are writers have raised this mission to the height of a priesthood. They set themselves to ex-

tracting the quintessence of their gloomy thoughts and their heart-breaking impressions, and seal them up in bottles for the use of the public. Youth sometimes tries their wares. But whether distaste for life be drawn from the contagion of another's evil or from our own heart, we can boldly qualify it as a harmful germ, which thrives in an artificial and abnormal life. We must declare war without mercy against it. A distaste for life is an insurrection against the whole universe, for its mission is to produce life. Down with the pessimists! Whether you be sarcastic or tragic, life denounces and contradicts you, ye workers of nothingness, on whose lips smiles disgust, as the will-o'-the-wisp over decaying marshes.

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Another kind of sadness is that which comes from evil thoughts. It is the cry of alarm which nature, abused within us, gives to our reason. It is absurd that reflecting on our life should make us despair of it. The whole philosophy of pessimism or of despondency, every religion which destroys joyousness, is a wrong. Its fruit condemns it. If pessimism were true, the flowers would cease to blow, the stars would go out, the springs of life would dry up. While the universe exists, there is no reason to despair of human life. We must therefore distrust opinions which destroy joyousness. Half truths may be depressing; the whole truth never.

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The melancholy which comes from an evil life tells its monotonous and lamentable story on pale drawn

faces. You are wretched because you have not respected the sources of life. A parasite is preying on you, vice is thriving on the very roots of your existence; and as it prospers, you fail. Wherever this depression exists, it shows a hidden evil. There is some lack or something wrong in the depths of your being. Your life, misunderstood, stained, and disordered, bleeds from a thousand wounds, and joy can no longer exist.

Joyousness takes flight, once again, from those rigid and conventional spheres where life and its actions are as straightly lined as a sheet of music. Abandoning the field to the followers of that terrible god *ennui*, it opens its wings and flies away. Like the flowers of the forest and the mountains, it loves free air, independence, and to rough it a little. Let us speak here, in passing, of the injury which luxurious and affected tastes have done to family pleasures and consequently to youth. Sociability is on sufferance. Instead of simple and cordial receptions, oft repeated, we give, from time to time, costly entertainments, where ambition and a puerile desire to outdo others destroy all pleasure in advance. Who suffers most from this? Youth, for it must find other amusement.

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I note, as one of the worst destroyers of joyousness, the spirit of scoffing. There is a laugh which withers whatever it touches, and dries up all feeling forever. It delights in ridiculing holy and venerable things. Victor Hugo has said, with rare psychological penetration, that the dullest minds were scoffers. To scoff is not to

laugh. On the contrary, scoffing kills laughter. We must have retained a certain freshness of impressions to be frankly amused. Let us not sacrifice the good old laugh of our France, with its jovial and good-natured irony and its natural gayety, to that questionable and profane spirit which turns to jest the saddest task, and scents evil from afar.

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To sum up: To preserve the capacity for happiness we must go back to work and to simplicity, we must respect life and observe its laws. What do I say? We must love life.

It seems superfluous to preach this love to youth; but it is not so. If there is anything which does not come of itself, it is this. To rise to this great love, and to open our heart until it embraces every part of it, is not the work of a day. One of the lowest conceptions of joy is that which makes it the appanage of youth alone, and considers all the rest of existence as an empty shell whose nut has been eaten. There is a joy of youth, no doubt, inseparable from the freshness of its impressions, and which can be lost by the way, by slow misshaping of character, by its faults or its sufferings. In this sense we can say of young people as we do of children: "Leave them to their happiness; care will come only too soon, — we are young but once. But this is not facing the truth. There are lives which begin in sadness and end in joy. Such a life is never more active nor younger than toward the forties, when it has overcome a series of material and mental difficulties. I have no hesitation

in saying that the joyousness then felt is more substantial than at twenty. Still more, there are certain old persons — admirable, but rare, I admit, though still to be found — in whom I have met joyousness in its purest form. I mean that serenity born of suffering accepted and conquered, of loved work, of long devotion to duty, and of an ever-deepening conviction of the aim of life and its worth. And when I teach youth to love life, I point out these old persons and those who resemble them, as professors in this high learning. I consider that to know pure light-heartedness on the threshold of life is a great happiness. We must admire it among those who have won it in hard fight; we must consider it an inestimable good, and aspire some day to share it.

Besides, the very joyousness of youth, that happy disposition which at times makes us think everything good and beautiful, has its conditions, — to be enjoyed it must be deserved. Joyousness is a *très grande dame*; she does not answer the invitation of the first comer. Many a company strives in vain, shouts, and spends money to bring her; she will not come; theirs are but empty sounds, their laugh rings false.

Nothing is more beautiful than joy. It is a divine spark, a daughter of the skies. It lifts the heart; it illumines the thought. It makes us see, in a single brilliant flash, secrets which on ordinary days our cloudy thoughts seek for in vain. It does away with distance, it brings men together, it inclines us to pity, it makes us stronger and better. It is so good and of such value that we must sacrifice, without a moment's

hesitation, all that lessens it, and seek for all that increases it.

Joy has its high days. At the time when Nature awakes, when all is growing, when the labourer is sowing the seed, have you ever seen the lark rise from the furrow, singing as he soars toward the sun, hymning the soul of the fields, the blossoming flowers, labour, and love? On certain days when hands clasp of themselves, when hearts beat in unison, joy is like this lark. It rises, and in its song which sums all life, it seems to say to it: "I love thee in thy morning and in thy evening, in tears and in laughter, in thy manly struggle, and in thy peaceful repose. I love thee under every sky, in every age, in all those closed eyes which rest beneath the earth; and whatever be my lot, I am happy to live, and I trust myself thankfully to that merciful will through whom we are, and which enwraps us ever."

CHAPTER VI.

SOLIDARITY.

1. The Family.

HUMAN solidarity presents us in the family a series of condensed object-lessons. The family has sometimes been considered a narrow framework which must be broken, that we may substitute for its close but restricted bonds the greater bond of social solidarity. This would be to destroy solidarity in its very germ.

We must have experienced the family sentiment before we can transport it on a larger scale to the city, to the national family, to the great family of mankind. The family is a school so happily contrived that we there learn things almost spontaneously. I do not know if we acquire most through the intelligence, the feelings, or the affections; but man is always influenced on every side, whether in the direction of his weakness or of his strength. He is assimilated, united, and incorporated, first by heredity, next by the affections, and last by reflection and appreciation. We realize so thoroughly in the glow of family life that it existed before us, encircles us in the present, and will live after us. It is not the child alone that feels itself thus enwrapped and protected, — it is its elders, the strong, the

aged. A greater hand than that of man unceasingly directs the family. Things human and divine so intermingle there that they can hardly be distinguished. If there be a sanctuary not made with hands, it is indeed the family. God there shows himself kind and paternal; he manifests himself always and in all things. The father stands in His place to the child, the child recalls Him to the father. The traits of our ancestors, revived in their posterity, give us a presentiment of a mysterious survival. Can you be realists, materialists, utilitarians in the family? You try to be, I well know; but you always stop at a certain point. On a sudden, at a moment when you least expect it, your heart tightens, and the tears come to your eyes. You say then, you positivists, "This is ridiculous;" and you say truly, for it is folly which has overtaken and possessed you, but a holy folly. A ray of kindness or tenderness, a ray of grief or pity, has revealed to you a world you did not know. Ah! you speak of suppressing the family, of renouncing its ties,—some of you for the greater glory of God, some of you for the greater good of society. But if for our sins the darkness of creation could fall again upon humanity; if God could disappear from our horizon; if all tradition, all the Bible, all that which man has graven in stone, could be lost and forgotten; if disorder and anarchy could throw back society into chaos,—some day, two souls that loved would find the germ of a new world beside the cradle of a child. Touch not the family. And to young men I say,—do not relax family ties.

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Fathers and mothers, whatever may be your position and your duties in the world, keep the better part of yourselves for the family. Be sure that in neglecting it you neglect an essential, and that the services you render elsewhere are neutralized by the injury you do at home. It is for this reason that we are bound to the family by the tender ties of joy and sorrow. Make the family pleasant for the children. Make the nest warm, but be at the same time judicious. Be good yet firm, loved yet respected. Be neither violent nor foolishly indulgent. Have none of that tyrannical love which stifles individuality and kills the will. May the family and the hearth never lose their power of attraction and development! Keep the confidence of your sons as long as possible. Make them feel the need and pleasure of confiding in you by the tact with which you hear them.

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How we must pity those who have no family, or toward whom the family has not done its duty! But let us not lift that veil; we should have before our eyes too hopeless a world.

Young men, do not relax family ties. Be your fathers' and your mothers' little children, even when you are yourselves fathers. It is so good to feel oneself a child; and the more one grows, and the older one gets, the more good it does one. The strongest men are those who have best loved their mothers. When we love and respect her who brought us into the world, we are very near respect for all women. And when we respect our father's moral authority, happy in being able to show

our filial feeling, we have a good basis for respecting all authority. *Honour thy father and thy mother.* This twofold law of respect—for woman in her motherhood and for man in his moral pre-eminence—must be considered as an indispensable foundation of human solidarity and of a good and just life. Let us strengthen our souls by contact with these elementary principles, these simple and holy truths, which become more wide-reaching the farther from childhood we see them, and which, even though our hair be white, we must hear on bended knee and with joined hands, as little children.

Will you, young reader, be of those who rate reverence as a virtue of childhood to which it is proper to say adieu when your beard begins to grow? Let me call your attention to this: The law which dominates all history has evolved from absolutely despotic power, based on fear, the authority of laws based on respect. Each of us goes through the different stages of this evolution. As children we obey at once through fear; when grown, we practise the voluntary obedience that comes from respect. Let us establish this kind of obedience in the family, that we may teach it to those about us. It is this willing obedience that our age and our democratic land most need. In acting as a good son, you cannot tell how far you have already acted as a good citizen. Emancipation consists in practising respect from conviction and with premeditation. Without respect no man is free. Liberty is self-government, according to the inner law.

We must check in ourselves, with all our might, the puerile tendency to criticise instinctively, to scoff, to

treat things cavalierly. It is the trick of a *gamin*. To become a man is to discover daily in men and things more reasons for taking them seriously. The great question of tradition and of to-day—that is, the question of despotism and liberty, which makes so much noise in the world—should be solved between fathers and sons. Between fathers and children should be settled also that great business of the rights of the individual as against the rights of the community, so that neither be wronged. No university, no book, will teach you all this as will the family. I say to you that it is the world in miniature. It is the humblest and the greatest school that exists. One learns there with ease a host of difficult things. In applying yourself to solve with patience, reverence, and fraternity the difficulties of the family, you are preparing yourself for the work you are to perform in society, where you will meet the same difficulties on a larger scale.

2. Friendship.

The friendship of youth! As the ancients used to offer a lock of hair upon the altars of the gods, so would I offer in its homage the best I have. Even when those we once loved have long slept beneath the sod, they live for us in the memories of a vanished past, and we catch ourselves sometimes in the silence of solitudes conversing with them familiarly, telling them the sorrow and joy we have met along the road of life, since the day when we laid them in the tomb beside it.

There are seasons for friendship in individual life, just as there are in that of society. Certain times of life have a sociability wholly juvenile; we then make friends easily. Others have the prudence and the reserve of misanthropic old men. When material interests are in the ascendant, when the struggle for existence is accentuated, and when the nerves are tense and overstrained, association with our kind becomes painful. Friction arises; there is a conflict of desires, a clashing of ambitions. We love then to shelter our irritability behind a wall of silence, as molluscs shut themselves up in their shells. But these varying periods concern us little. The time of good and warm friendships for each of us is the time of youth. I always sincerely pity a young man who has no friend, and if he is himself the chief cause of his isolation, I remonstrate seriously with him. We must have comrades, and a certain number of them, to lead a life in common, to rub off our corners against theirs, as we polish flints by shaking them together in a bag. We must have comrades again to pursue the same aims, to develop *esprit de corps* and solidarity, to sing and laugh with us; but among this troop of good companions it is essential that we should cultivate relations more intimate still, that we should have friends. Our intellectual development demands it. To chat, converse, talk together, to utter in the most absolute intimacy our ideas on all subjects, in interminable and delightful discussions, whether strolling side by side or at night by the fireside, — what an advantage is this to a growing intelligence! This advantage is more apparent still in epochs when, as to-day,

orientation is long and difficult. To whom shall we tell all our thoughts? Who better than a friend of our own age, exposed to like difficulties, can understand us, hear our questions, and answer our objections? If I were offered in exchange the most delightful of intellectual enjoyments, I should not hesitate an instant to refuse them for that friendly discussion of all sorts of things where two fresh minds, curious as to everything, give themselves up to the delights of discovery, while tasting those of affection. There is perhaps only one satisfaction of this kind more rare and more precious, and that is to meet again, after long years of separation, a friend of our youth, and to live over with him for an hour of mingled pleasure and sadness those good times of old, exclaiming again and again: "Do you remember? do you remember?"

The friendships of youth have another advantage in that they influence the feelings, the character, and the conduct. Good friendships supply many things that youth lacks; they put to flight morbid fancies, and aid it to walk steadily along paths where it is apt to stumble. This is especially the case when we reach that perfect frankness which keeps back nothing. There are days when no one but a friend can be of use. When we no longer listen to him, our moral deafness, for the moment at least, is complete. We must, then, cultivate friendship, if only as a means of moral perfection and education, and of exchanging help in times of trouble. The cup of cold water of tenderness and good will which our friend offers us to-day to help us bear and overcome our trials, he may perhaps himself need to-

morrow when we shall offer it to him with a like affection.

* *

In these days of duplicity and hypocrisy friendship should become more and more a bond of loyalty and truth. Who should talk to us so freely as a friend? He is a brother of our own choosing, he is nearer to us than our own family. When truth shows itself in his face and speaks through his voice, we cannot say that "it assumes a countenance too imperiously magisterial."¹

Another great resource of friendship is that it strengthens us for those sharp and formidable struggles which youth is called to sustain, for causes which it has nearest at heart, and which are often unpopular in the community. To throw off routine and bondage, to keep oneself from giving way a thousand times in those adverse encounters which discourage the best of us, to avoid distrusting oneself after repeated opposition, we must renew, from time to time, our stock of courage and faith in the bosom of friendship.

* *

I will add but a word. It seems to me not only possible but desirable, that youth should cultivate, outside of friendships with those of like age, close and affectionate relations with those of riper age, or with elderly persons who have retained interest in those who are beginning life. A young man, even he who lacks no

¹ Montaigne.

advantage of position, is often happy to have some one above him whom he may love and admire. It is not a question of swearing by any one *in verba magistri*, but of attaching oneself to some one, of looking up to some one. As a general rule, the best-made minds, those most capable of independence, at a certain age seek a master, and ask nothing better than to be disciples.

I do not admit that serious, busy, and distinguished men have no time to devote to youth; that they cannot instruct them, not only as a class, but as individuals, by advising and by learning to know and to be useful to them. Write fewer books, good sirs, and throw so many more living words of advice into the grateful furrows of young minds. This is in the highest degree for the interests of man and of our country. How pleased I am to see these ideas so long forgotten begin to show themselves anew on all sides! Let us be brothers! It is the great motto of universal solidarity. Let the France of to-day and of yesterday fraternize with the France of to-morrow.

Verily, youth is good; it contents itself with so little, it is so thankful for what is done for it, that it is always a pleasure and a profit to serve it. And I was near forgetting the best thing about it,—we become young in its company. All the elixirs in the world cannot compare with it, for those who dread old age.

* *

3. *Love.*

Flambeau sublime et pur mais qui tremble souvent,
 Pour te bien abriter de la pluie et du vent,
 Et faire rayonner ta clarté souveraine,

Heureux qui peut passer sans s'interrompre un jour
 De l'amour de sa mère à l'amitié sereine
 Et de l'amitié sainte à son premier amour !¹

A. DORCHAIN.

A good and sympathetic physician — one of those whom familiarity with the dead has not taught contempt for humanity, but who, on the contrary, has seen beyond the little which the intelligence of man can discover in our poor remains the holiness of life — complains that human life is neglected at its beginning. We are better informed, he says, as to how to raise young domestic animals than to care for children. This doctor's remark has often come to my mind *à propos* of love. If there is a matter on which good advice is necessary at the beginning of life, it is this. If there is a matter on which it is lacking, it is this. Every person finds the subject a delicate one. Teachers think that parents alone are competent to treat it; parents refer it to teachers. Thus, most of the time, both neglect it. Youth reaches its most critical age without a compass

¹ *touch* "Flambeau sublime and pure, yet often wavering,
 Happy is he who without interruption —
 That he may shelter thee from rain and wind
 And make thy sovereign light irradiate —
 Passes from mother love to serene friendship,
 From holy friendship to his own first love."

and without direction. I mistake. The instruction that is neglected by parents and teachers is always supplied from outside sources. It is impossible that children's curiosity should not some day or other be satisfied. A bad companion, one of those compositions which are getting to be so difficult to avoid, initiates the being who is still pure into what it is agreed to call the secret of life. From that moment a dreadful work goes on in the imagination of this novice. Confidence in parents and masters is rudely shaken. For their ascendancy is substituted that of a teacher without authority; something new and perilous has entered his life, and it will be difficult indeed to eliminate it.

We touch here on the first serious and melancholy point in this complex question of love. Though we are writing for adult youth, we must go back of it. Love in its numerous ramifications really covers all our life, and what the innocent child has heard on the outskirts of a world which is still closed to him determines very often his conduct later on. I cannot, then, but deplore that we are informed by preference on this intimate and sacred subject by irreverent strangers, and that an hour of brutal indiscretion, which distresses us long, perhaps forever, fills for us an office to which there cannot be brought too much precaution, too much maternal wisdom, on the part of those who love us best.

* * *

I will, however, content myself with having thus touched on a subject which concerns the age imme-

diately preceding adolescence, and without further delay will return to my proper field.

How should a young man who is not married and, we will suppose, not engaged, conduct himself as regards love?

The prime necessity here is to possess respect for life, for its pre-eminence, its worth, its sacredness, and, consequently, for the obligations imposed on us by our position as its heirs. The fundamental sentiment which should run through all the acts and behaviour of a young man is that of his virile dignity. If he has this sentiment, life will seem to him a deposit, and not an individual possession, and he will have constantly within him a powerful ally, very noble and very efficacious, in aiding him to keep and guide himself.

The sentiment of virile dignity and self-respect can, without doubt, be strengthened or thwarted by secondary means. At the age when the passions awake and when their very novelty, their disturbing and unforeseen character, constitute a peril, it is as possible to lessen this peril as to increase it. The influence of regimen, of food, and of surroundings is at the very least as great here, if not greater, than that of nature. Excessive mental labour, a sedentary life, pernicious reading, idleness, can transform into a tormenting and persistent desire that which without it would have been easily mastered. On the other hand, a healthful regimen, energetic habits, amusements, and physical fatigue are diversions so useful that, thanks to them, the most critical years pass by unnoticed. All this is of the last importance. One must live normally to act normally

Destroy the equilibrium of one's life, and you at once disturb that of one's actions. The causes of individual and social misconduct, for the most part, are the results of a series of hygienic lapses.

Yet the fundamental point is always the conception we form of our life, our dignity, and, consequently, of our aim. This is why self-respect is the great thing in youth. A grand ideal, a lofty conception of life in its entirety, and of the work which each of us is called to do, is the best councillor in matters of love. For, first of all, it preserves us from the sophisms and cynical precepts with which persons of stunted feelings have sown this whole subject. We need not say that if youth meets anywhere on its road foolish and criminal maxims, it is here. In the name of that which they call a physical necessity, they urge it not to injure itself, but to yield to its desires. To act thus is right; to act otherwise is foolish, and even wicked. "In a land where the virginity of a lad of twenty is the subject of traditional and almost national pleasantries,"¹ it is good to have within one a counter weight to such enormities. It is true that a simple glance at our youth in general is enough to make us understand that its need, if it have any, is to keep and husband its strength.

Their would-be need, which they talk so loudly about, exists, far more than elsewhere, in imaginations over-stimulated by bad reading, sensual talk, and bad examples. But even let us admit this need as a real one. It is none the less necessary that our whole nature, its noble instincts and its higher needs, be re-

¹ Jules Lemaitre.

spected. Acts which lessen our esteem for ourselves and for others, which detract from our dignity, are bad, even though they are provoked by a perfectly legitimate desire. How many things there are, in themselves harmless, which we must deny ourselves, because their acquisition costs too dear. On a host of occasions when many duties are pressing on us at the same time, it would be disgraceful to think of rest, hunger, or thirst, though the enjoyment of all these is among the incontestable rights of man. He who has an ideal of action and principles of conduct is distinguished from him who has none, by the position he accords in his life to the different needs of his being, and by the clairvoyance and the firmness with which he knows how to subordinate some to others. This is why I lay down the principle that the prime necessity in love is to have an ideal, because this ideal helps us to govern ourselves. For him who appreciates his life, his dignity, and that of others, to yield to his passions is, under certain conditions, to betray what is most noble in him to gratify a simple desire. Consequently, while recognizing that this desire is a legitimate one in itself, he prefers to sacrifice it; and thus the first homage he renders to his nature and to himself is that of chastity.

Chastity has a host of enemies. I do not include cynics and scoffers. With them we have nothing to do here, for all our arguments are based on that whole conception of life which we have laid down in this book. But it is well to answer a specious and even serious objection which is founded on the danger of being too wise. These enemies are quick to throw at your head,

as an unanswerable argument, "He who tries to play the angel, plays the fool." There is certainly truth in this old adage, and it is not for me to contest it. But we can see by the sequel that it is not here a case of playing the angel. I will simply observe that many play the fool who have never tried to play the angel. They have not fallen into the mud because they tried to fly too high, but because they began too low down. The best way to become the slave of one's desires is to obey, not master them. And as to the deformity of character which can result from monastic chastity, it has its counterpart — and, indeed, a great one, alas! — in that sad decadence of so many persons who have never had any other rule than their pleasure. Even on this ground I am sure of my position. If there were only excess of laxity on one hand and excess of restraint on the other, I should choose the latter, believing that I should sacrifice less of my manhood.

Nevertheless, I do not preach monasticism in speaking of chastity. I do not advise you to despise virility, but to respect and preserve it. We have so far examined only the lesser — the arid, the negative — side of this question. Many go no further. Society during whole epochs has wrestled with it without finding a solution. Extremes provoke extremes. Our existing society, like many which have preceded it, shows the working of this law. As regards love, it is at the same time lax and prudish, depraved and severely virtuous. All this is logical. A society which permits license in youth and counsels it, degrades love. The temptation to consider it questionable or inferior becomes natural. The cor-

ruption of some has as a counterpart the prudery or the asceticism of others; and of this medley of tendencies hypocrisy is born. Tartuffe is outwardly an ascetic, inwardly a rake.

Alas! these are contradictions which we pay for with the disruption of society, its principles and its institutions. We are, in truth, in that sensitive state when the vibration from a blow is far reaching. Sin against love at its base, — in youth, — and the life of the whole nation is torn, and suffers immeasurably.

I sum up, then: the rule of conduct here is chastity. Every infraction is a sin. Though this law may seem difficult and severe, it is the only safe one. Morality without it is but rubbish. It is hard to be truthful and honest; but no one has ever deduced therefrom that lies and theft are allowable. May he who falls, who goes astray, — no matter how, — and loses respect for himself and for love, know the injury he has done himself. This, in painful moral situations, is his best hope for salvation. But to call evil good because evil is hard to avoid is worse than to act wrongly, for it is to warp one's conscience. This is a maxim which should be promulgated with absolute authority.

This principle once laid down, we must consider the life of those young men who try to practise it. We look on here at a struggle which has our warm sympathy. For him who has kept the exquisite perception of morality, there can be no more beautiful spectacle. Sully Prudhomme, in his preface to the poetry of Monsieur A. Dorchain, *La jeunesse pensive*, says: —

"In reading these verses, where the struggles and griefs of our twentieth year find their discreet but very sincere expression, more than one will feel old wounds open in his soul. We cannot look on, as cold spectators, at the suffering which he — the young man — undergoes. We lean toward him from the bank to offer him a friendly hand."

This struggle is more or less violent according to natures and temperaments. There are some privileged beings whom a certain inborn nobleness preserves, by giving them an instinctive repugnance for all which is low and trivial. Evil takes no hold on them. We may say of them, —

*Le moule en est d'airain si l'espèce en est rare ;
Elle sait ce que vaut son marbre de Carrare,
Et que les eaux du ciel ne l'entament jamais.¹*

A. DE MUSSET.

But others, especially among the best of youth, are at a disadvantage from their sensibility, their power of imagination, their very qualities.

*Enfant, dans la lutte éternelle
Tu crois avoir dompté ton cœur ;
Déjà tu veux ouvrir ton aile
Et t'envoler, libre et vainqueur.

Tu crois à la force bénie,
À la vertu que rien n'abat . . .
Va, la lutte n'est pas finie,
Ce n'est que le premier combat.*

¹ Literally: "Its mould is brazen, though the kind is rare; it knows the value of its Carrara marble, and that the rains of heaven can never stain it."

*Ton âme n'est point d'un ascète
Hors de la matière emporté,
Mais d'un amant et d'un poète
Ivre de forme et de beauté.*

*Ton cœur est plus chaud que le notre ;
Tu le sens bondir nuit et jour.
Tu souffriras donc plus qu'un autre
Par le Désir et par l'Amour.¹*

A. DORCHAIN.

But we must get back to prose, and look at the situation as it really exists. For in the struggle of which we speak, and which, be it more or less bitter, no one can avoid, the important thing is not to be always the stronger, but never to surrender. In the great book of the wisdom of life, there is a precept as important as that of taking heed lest one fall; it is that where one is bidden to rise again when one has fallen. For a man to pass through life without ever offending any law of conscience, it is necessary that in chastity as well as other respects he should be perfect. We have by no means reached that point. Let us expect, then, those

¹ "Child, in this endless strife you believe that you have gained the mastery over your heart, and already you would spread your wing and fly away free and victorious."

"You believe in that blessed force, that virtue which nothing can destroy. Go to! the struggle is not finished,—this is but the first encounter."

"Your soul is not that of an ascetic carried beyond the concern for material things, but that of a lover and a poet intoxicated with form and beauty."

"Your heart is warmer than ours; you can feel it bounding night and day. You will then suffer more than another from desire and love."

dark hours when our vision is troubled, when the struggle seems uncertain, when weakness, discouragements, and even failures overcome us. These are most unhappy and most perilous moments. Never mind them. A man who is down is not necessarily dead; he may be only wounded or have simply stumbled. The great thing is for him not to lie there, not to give up, lose hope, and, above all, not to renounce his aim. Let his ideal remain intact, and his hope of some day coming off conqueror be unshaken! Let the evil be still called evil, and let him who has fallen recognize the fact! Above everything, let there be no sophisms, no falsehoods.

Here the intervention of sure and tried friends is very beneficial. It would be a great shame to see an upright youth, one pure in heart, come to despise himself or despair of himself, because of this or that moral defeat. Let us lift youth up and encourage it, with a tenderness that never fails.

Who, alas! trouble themselves about this? Nothing equals the inconsistency of the world's conduct toward the young. It sets them bad examples, and then, when they go astray, abuses or keeps them down where they have fallen. By turns lax and severe, we ignore that pity which lifts up and makes whole, and few indeed know that mercy of the just which consists in hating the sin while loving the sinner. We are here treading a difficult path, and one little used. One would say that we were far away from humanity, though in its very midst. Is not the great work of life to repair error? That is not the best army which has never been beaten; we do

not know, indeed, how it would behave in defeat. To know oneself beaten, to cover one's retreat, to collect one's forces, to repair one's losses, to bind one's wounds, to reanimate the discouraged, to return to the combat with new energy, — this is the great, the supreme proof of courage. And if any Pharisee blames me, and taxes me with being too indulgent in advance, I will quote the words of Him who was at the same time just but merciful, and who proclaimed that gospel of pardon in which the sin is condemned and the sinner is saved: *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone.*

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It is time now to leave these preliminary topics, in order to treat of love in its plenitude and its dignity. It is on its behalf, and that we may be more worthy of it, that we wage a war without mercy against whatever can tarnish or compromise it. To protect us from all the base caricatures of love, nothing is more powerful than true love itself. This love youth should prepare for; it should recognize all that is highest and purest in it. In a word, the chastity which we preach is not that of eunuchs, but of men. "I think little of a chastity which is entirely on the surface and entirely negative; it gives no guarantee for the future. True chastity has its seat in the soul as well as in the body. An empty heart is never chaste; a wife must occupy the sacred place which belongs to her."¹

Respect for woman is the complement of self-respect.

¹ T. Fallot: *Lettre de 25 août*, 1891.

Just as self-respect rests on the conception which one forms of life and its worth, so respect for woman is the reflex form of an instinct which is connected with the deepest secrets of life. Wherever it is seen, it results from the union of two elements,—the masculine and the feminine, which are like severed parts. It seems as if the perfect being was made in separate individualities, neither of which can live by itself, in order to oblige them each to seek the other, to make a perfect whole. The attraction which draws man to woman is vastly stronger than the temporary gratification of lust. It is a mysterious power of the widest reach,—the power of immortal womanhood. And it is precisely to give this all its strength, that he must inspire himself with the twofold respect,—that, namely, for himself and for woman,—different forms of the same veneration for the mysteries of life. Just as self-respect springs from the high idea we have of manliness, and thus comes from a higher source than our individual personality, so our respect for woman in general precedes that for some particular woman. And if love is to reach in us its true dignity and its fullest scope, a broad impersonal basis is necessary for it. We find ourselves, then, in the same position, as regards love, that we are in toward the majority of sentiments that attract and interest youth. They have their beginning in a general sentiment, and later on they concentrate this on one object. Just as, at the beginning of life, the young man is curious about everything, sympathetic toward everything, and, little by little, devotes his attention to specified objects, so his love takes on at first a general

character. We do not begin by loving a woman, and, above all, women, — which latter can be but the result of long decadence and the equivalent of dilettanteism in morality and philosophy, — we begin by loving womanhood, or rather by experiencing that sentiment at once irresistible, sweet, elevating, and inspiring, which we can justly entitle the cult for woman. The cult for woman is the origin and the source of love; it must exist before love, must live beside it, and endure its whole lifetime.

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But I must not stop at this point. It is as necessary to know and cultivate the real woman as the ideal woman. We do not think that she should be kept apart from young men, hidden, cloistered, and surrounded by the perilous glamour of forbidden fruit. She should, on the contrary, be sought out and seen often. Our society has made a great mistake. Not only does it not encourage in youth the ideal cult for woman, but it does all it can to keep the sexes apart, and thus prevent them from knowing each other as they are. It is a great evil. How shall we hinder facile liaisons? How shall we prevent, above all, the contempt for woman — that social calamity — from spreading among youth which knows only the worst side of the feminine world?

* *

Young people of both sexes are made to see one another and to be together. They should have common amusements, common pleasures, — naturally under

the eyes of their parents, and surrounded, above all in a world like ours, with necessary precautions. In truth, when we consider the life open to our youth, we are obliged to say that it is cut off from the purest pleasures. No one seems to remember that when one is young one has need of a host of things, — need of affection, of an interchange of sentiments with pleasant women who are worthy of respect, of frank and genial gayety shared with young girls of the same age. This need in the case of a young man, presumably not etiolate and corrupt, is much stronger than those baser needs we hear so much about.

Yes, in that errant and indistinct, that groping life, which is the life of youth, it needs enlightened and warm friendships, smiles and brightness, to dissipate gloomy thoughts, and encouraging looks to drive away mournful or evil suggestions. It has a heart, and what troubles me is that, as a rule, no one seems to suspect it. Is it, then, astonishing that youth seeks gratification in forbidden paths, since everywhere else it is repulsed? Alas! though it seeks it far and near, it finds only illusion and disgust, and soon realizes that free love is but a mirage of the desert.

*Oh! bien fou qui prendrait pour éclairer ses pas
Ces lueurs trompeuses ou feintes!
Ne te retourne pas! ne les regarde pas!
Ce sont des étoiles éteintes.¹*

A. DORCHAIN.

¹ "Oh! fool is he who takes these delusive and false gleams to lighten his path. Turn not; disregard them; they are but extinct stars."

* *

The worst result of our wretched and abnormal life, of our incurable laxity as regards love, of our corruption, is that it has made us lose that world of charm and beauty which I will call the halo of love. It is a morning land full of bursting flowers, bathed in the sunshine and the dew, a pure and virgin soil where no foot has trod, where no dust and no stain have come. It is the land where love is born amid the friendships, the smiles, the sports of youth. We see there but its sweetness; the depth of its suffering is hidden. Love, without doubt, is good, even when it makes us weep. We must regret none of it, not even our tears and disappointments. But the land of which I speak does not know them as yet. It lies at the threshold of our life, like a radiant paradise where the happiness of living, of seeing, of worshipping reverently from afar, and oftenest without telling our love, suffices us. We have closed this paradise. We must reopen it and teach our youth to desire it. It will soon learn that there are more pleasure and more charm in this flower of sentiment than in all artificial pleasures put together. A youth without love is like a morning without sun. If our youth is morose, it is because many have become sceptical as to love. They have taken the very paths that led them from it. Life casts off him who has troubled its source; thenceforth it refuses him. Nevermore can he grasp its vigorous beauty. Neither the blue heavens, nor the flowers, nor the murmuring waters reveal to him their secret. He feels himself shut out of life. This is the most terrible of excommunications. To his withered soul the world

seems withered. He who respects himself and respects love, knows intense joys, the joys of a child, unknown to others. He has preserved intact the power of being happy; a healthful and vigorous life runs in his arteries like sap in the trunk of an oak; his youth gives him that divine intoxication which makes the whole world sing in his heart. All the lives of dissipation put together are not worth one of his hours.

Youthful enthusiasm is but another form of love. It increases and lessens with it. In proportion as our power of loving and the quality of our love diminish in us, enthusiasm also lowers or changes. Respectful love is a source not only of poetry, of joy, of high spirits, but also of power and courage. The secrets of virtue lie open wholly to him who practises virile chastity. Virtue is but the summing up of all the manly qualities which blossom in this world of beauty and fidelity. It is she who makes strong, indomitable hearts, clear-seeing eyes, and arms that can strike mighty blows. To me, this concentration of strength, this proud consciousness of its dignity and its power, seem its highest recompense.

I do not wish to insist too much on that other recompense, which will consist, later on, in entering marriage, sound in body and young in heart, with the woman of your choice. Lofty as this aim is, its fulfilment cannot but seem a little far off, especially in view of the harsh demands of existing society.

Nevertheless, if one plan his future career and prepare himself for it, ought he not also to give thought to the time when his duties as head of a family, as pro-

tector of a wife, as a father, create new responsibilities in him? He who has never thanked his parents for having so lived as to bequeath him sound health, pure blood, a complete vitality, does not realize the solidarity of flesh and blood, nor what austere duties we have to perform toward those who will some day be born of us. Of all the crimes committed under God's heaven, that which I would least like to have upon my conscience would be to have polluted in my person the source of life, and to leave to others a weakened existence, loaded with miseries, a wretched body, and a worn-out mind.

These things are worthy of consideration, and youth is the only age when it is not too late to consider them.

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Thus far we have treated but one phase of love. It is time that we looked higher and farther.

4. Love of Country, and the Social Role of Youth.

Beyond the family, friendships, and love — those intimate and sacred worlds where the individual is initiated into its solidarity — stretches, enveloping them all, his country.

Patriotism in its essence is our joyous communion with the surroundings of our birth. The flower laughs in its natal sun; the oak grasps the soil in its powerful embrace, and draws thence its nourishment; man smiles on the paternal roof, on its encircling life, on his father

and mother; he is full of it all, he is attached to it all, at first unconsciously, then, little by little, with full realization. Through the family, that primal form of all love, man rises to a broader, richer love, — that of his country. By an interchange of influences and benefits the country unceasingly produces the family, nourishes it from its strength, forms and inspires it; and the family remakes, renews, and perpetuates the country.

"Patriotism is, then, an *ensemble* of sentiments, of inherited tendencies, of affinities, which make us discern beyond the individual life, beyond the life of the family, a grand and broad common life in which we have a part.

"Our country is a part of our blood, of the nervous fibre of our individual life, of our thought, of our speech, of our very tones of voice. It is knit in our bones, and sings on our lips.

"Our country is, further, the skies above us, the mountains, the fields, the vast ocean that beats upon our shores. All this is not without us, it is within us. We carry in our very bodies, as it were, an echo of our motherland, and in our hearts her image radiant and ineffaceable.

"Our country is, still further, all they who sleep in the tomb, our fathers and our mothers. It is the torch of life passed from hand to hand through the ages, which we hold in our turn; it is all that we have suffered, thought, struggled, prayed for, — all our patrimony of trials and glory, of virtues and failures, of living strength or of open wounds.

"Our country is our grandsires, but it is also our

children. It is the frail and lovely head which comes demanding a place at our fireside; it is he who, lying on his mother's knees, bears sleeping within him all the past and all the future.

"Truly our country is greater than the individual or than the family. It is one of those grand stages in that mysterious life which advances from the individual to a fuller, higher existence, and which demands, justifies, and imposes all sacrifices, even that of our own life."¹

A real and powerful love of country can be almost instinctive; but it has everything to gain in becoming conscient and reflective. It then initiates one into the national life and soul. The time for this initiation is youth. He who is passing through the period when the genius of his nation is revealed to him, perceives within himself a new birth. The deeper and more serious this inner action is, the purer and loftier is his love for his country. We must reject a noisy, braggart, blustering patriotism, and fill ourselves rather with that which is silent, true, and active. Above all, do I wish that you never give way to "jingoism," which is the caricature of patriotism. The best way to love one's country is to cultivate the genius of it in oneself, and to watch carefully against those mistakes and faults which will stain its good name. The duty of French youth in this respect is as noble as it is easy to determine. The whole course of our history points it out to us. Democratic France—born of the joint action of the human will and the force of circumstances—sees, more and more, its ideal blend with the ideal of

¹ C. Wagner : *Justice*, p. 113.

human progress. No country in the world has spent its resources, its genius, its blood, for immaterial good, for liberty, justice, truth, as has ours. It has sought these not only for itself, but for others, often for the enemies of yesterday or to-morrow. Our history is the most splendid refutation of national utilitarianism. We, at least, have not made of our country an agglomeration of egoisms, nor an attack on humanity. The grand traditions of heroism and of generosity which result from such a past as ours are wholly of a kind to elevate the instinctive love for the fatherland to that sentiment, at once reflective and enthusiastic, where the cult of country is the same as the cult of humanity. What ideal could be more beautiful to fire and form the characters of the young, and inspire noble lives?

I do not in the least deduce from this that French youth should aspire to the questionable habits of those cosmopolites whose mouths are full of the word "humanity," but who treat patriotism as a prejudice. Without country humanity is but a hollow entity. Just as he who discharges faithfully his duties to his family renders the greatest service to his country, so, in devoting himself to his duties as a citizen of some one country, he serves humanity. The true way for us to serve humanity is to cherish with the greatest affection the sacred flame of the national ideal, and to warm ourselves always at it anew.

The cause of that liberty, justice, and equality which our democracy is trying to realize is in a great measure, in the world at large, dependent on the treatment which it receives at our hands. We can make it suc-

ceed or fail by the way we organize our national life. The more I see of the march of events, the better do I understand that in attending to our duties as Frenchmen we are accomplishing at the same time a general mission. I deduce, then, very naturally this: humanity is interested that French democracy be strong and wise. It will always become more so, if united. Humanity, then, is interested that we be on as good terms as possible with our compatriots, and that we treat them justly and kindly, — in a word, as brothers. Is this not evident enough? To assume it, nevertheless, is to foresee a vast programme. For much must be done before our noble national ideal can be widely practised. We must not confound this ideal with the spectacle which its daily life affords. Verily, if that life is advancing toward our ideal, it is still far from it. Let us acknowledge the truth honestly, — the mass of our people are still far removed from education in democracy and the ways of liberty. We have seen it rise by its energy, its activity, its elasticity, from unprecedented defeat from without. It has nothing to dread from that quarter. If it be but vigilant, it can rest in the consciousness of its strength and its regained dignity. The time has come to turn all our attention to our internal affairs, that we may raise by our behaviour, as citizens, the *ensemble* of national life to the plane of our democratic ideal. Here the duty and the *rôle* of youth are clear. I am going to try to point them out briefly, and I will say to each of my young compatriots: If you love your country, this is what you must do.

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By a sort of fatality, which all other nations too are experiencing in different degrees, society has reached a state of disunion much to be regretted. Interests, social positions, political creeds, philosophic opinions, beliefs, all tend to separate us. There is no need to be specific. Read the papers and observe life. Since the press and speech have been free, how many days pass without some of our fellow-citizens being wronged by others? The higher genius of a nation must be powerful, indeed, to triumph over such a state of affairs. If, notwithstanding, we are steadily advancing, what an unshaken faith must that be which animates our principles? We should have still greater reason for advance if, instead of being disunited, we marched hand in hand. National concentration is the great work for us to attempt; the times are ripe for it.

I know that youth suffers from the melancholy spectacle of so many useless struggles and so many antagonisms, and that it is animated by loftier aims. We can address it the more confidently because we feel that it is in sympathy with us. I will say to it: You have done well during several years past to try to come together and to organize, and I approve all that has resulted from this salutary inspiration. Associations or circles of students, young people's societies, whatever may be their shades of difference and their aims, do good in this way, — that they cultivate *esprit de corps*. Sometimes, alas! they cultivate especial "isms" and party spirit, which amounts to associating for a bad purpose. But I mention this unfortunate tendency only in passing. As a rule, association among equals is an

excellent thing. It gives a higher interest to life and thought. But I ask more of it than this. You are in the habit of seeking those of similar tastes, — according to the old proverb, Like seeks like. This is in response to a need, — that of coming in contact with people of the same world and the same way of thinking as ourselves. But if you are concerned only for this, you will inevitably end in being narrow-minded. Narrowness engenders the clannish spirit, which, again, is a great evil. We must remember that man needs to see and hear other things than those of his accustomed surroundings. Step outside of your associations, your circles, your clubs, and see what is going on elsewhere. Mingle with minds of a different shade from your own. The result will be kaleidoscopic, but at the same time how interesting and instructive!

In a democratic country, where every opinion has a right to be heard, we need to cultivate the faculty of listening. We know how to speak, how to shout even, but we do not know how to listen to our opponent. At bottom we have a very poor respect for authority. As soon as opinions contrary to our own are advanced, a demon within incites us to cry, Enough! The result is that while we are entirely free to associate and discuss, our own fault often forbids what the law sanctions. Nine times out of ten a public meeting degenerates into an uproar or a fight. This is not democratic. We must learn, then, to bear contradiction. How shall we do this? By seeking among our young compatriots those of different opinions, different religious views, different studies, and serving with them an ap-

prenticeship to liberty and toleration, or, as I like better to call it, justice.

Youth is not, as a rule, evilly disposed. Even stags are kindly when young; their bloodthirsty instincts awake later. It is the same with man. If we take advantage of his naturally happy disposition, we can secure most excellent results. I know of student societies in Switzerland where political differences have no influence whatever. These societies are so limited in point of numbers that there are good fellowship and even friendships among their members. Friendship, like love, often exists between persons of different social standing, and long outlasts the years of study. These friends of youth often find themselves in rival political camps, or separated by those other distances which life creates. But their common memories make a neutral ground on which to meet, and this takes from their contentions much of their bitterness. Doubtless, such things occur among us also. But they are exceptions, only too rare. We are brought up in herds separated from one another, and party interests often demand that youth itself be enrolled and drawn up for battle.

Sainte-Beuve has said, —

*Il existe, en un mot, chez les trois quarts des hommes,
Un poète, mort jeune, à qui l'homme survit.*¹

In a certain sense this is true; but we can with much more truth say that what dies young in three fourths of

¹ "There is, in a word, in three fourths of mankind, a poet who has died young, whom the man has survived."

us is the man himself. In lieu of him there survives a lawyer, a professor, a politician, a financier, a workman, a churchman. And when one wishes to address these survivors, these sad remains, and tell them of humanity, of human duties and human interests, they answer: It is none of our affair.

Can we not, in traversing our own country, meet a host of men in whom the Frenchman has died young, yielding his place to a radical, an anarchist, a monarchist, a clerical? For the love of our fair land, let us so nourish the Frenchman in us that he may survive all the epithets that will be heaped upon him later on, and let us create harmonious surroundings where shall be able to meet together men of good-will from all the four quarters of the intellectual horizon.

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But this is not enough. We must overstep social barriers. Studious youth and the youth of the people have much to learn each from the other.

During the delightful *fêtes* of the University of Toulouse, in May, 1891, M. Jaurès, professor of philosophy, said as follows: "The advance of some of us toward truth must be evidenced by a general advance toward justice; and just as in these May days the beautiful garden which surrounds these buildings sends into the very laboratories and libraries breaths of perfume from the reawakened earth, so ought pure knowledge and high thinking to be permeated by the fraternal spring of human association." These are most beautiful sentiments, and they should be put into

practice. I have spoken already, several times, of certain teachers of evil, who for filthy lucre corrupt the people and sell them their detestable writings. If studious youth, as a whole, understood its duties in this respect, it would soon make an organized fight against these pernicious influences. The efforts of certain societies in Paris and in the provinces in this direction deserve to be imitated. But let no one imagine that this will be the only advantage from that drawing together of classes which I so much desire, and for which I pray. The people will bring as much to it as you. We must not only harangue them, we must seek them out, we must visit them, we must be friends with young workmen, and, if possible, even found societies where shall come together all the elements that go to the making of our country. To organize a public spirit and a common thought in the nation, we must begin in these little ways, so laborious, and often so difficult to put into practice. Habitual and kindly intercourse between the different grades of society destroys a host of those evil prejudices which are so easily maintained. They do not know one another or they would understand this. We cannot remedy this social disunion and universal distrust among the masses by a single concerted action. Confidence can only be regained little by little. A whole new world opens to us here which we are only just beginning to enter. I can never forget the good which I have constantly brought away from familiar commerce with the people, both in the city and in the country, as well as from the delightful reunions of the societies

for brotherly aid and social studies, founded in Paris ten years ago by M. T. Fallot, which deserve to be better known and attended.

* * *

There is still another way to be pointed out. Good-will alone is all that is needed to carry out the one we have been speaking of, but for this one there is needed a spirit of sacrifice and of heroism. It is nothing less than to make voyages of discovery into the different domains of the life of the people. This life is full of seamy sides, of grievous or admirable details which cannot be seen from without. The people understand and judge themselves badly; they can give us no information on the subject. We are, then, in face of a world closed not by distrust alone nor from choice, but by the force of circumstances. To find its key we must resolve to live the life of the lowly. Just as some persons take the train or cross the sea to explore far-off lands, so must we leave for a time our world to traverse not great material, but great social distances. At such a day and such an hour you cease to be he whom you were. Under different dress, among persons unknown to you, you engage yourself as a labourer, a servant, a private soldier, cutting off rigorously all recollection of your privileges and making no use whatever of them. You enter their rank in life, and you agree to be treated like the rest of their world. There is no book, no person, even the most experienced, that can open your eyes as can this kind of investigation.

When a man is preparing himself to exercise an in-

fluence of some kind, to direct no matter what, to hold in his hand a portion of another's destiny, as is the case with the majority of educated youth, it is worth while to have passed some time among his constituents, the weak and the ignorant, that he may divine better through suffering the secret of justice.

Nothing prepares one to command as does obedience; nothing is so useful to him who is to speak, direct, or decide authoritatively, as to have first been obliged to obey in silence, whether his orders were good or bad, just or unjust.

A single slight illness, where he must resign himself to be treated or maltreated by a professional brother, is worth to a physician a whole year's observation of others.

Our ancestors had in certain lands the suggestive custom of once a year reversing the *rôle* of servants and masters. It was at Christmas, in memory of the gospel. The same custom, taken seriously, would afford most spiritual and most serious object-lessons. To put oneself in another's place is, in truth, the very essence of solidarity.

Life looks very differently from the point of view of the anvil than from that of the hammer. It is good to see it from both points.

The advantage of these investigations which we are recommending to youth does not consist alone in the discoveries that we make in this new field. When we return to it, our old life presents to us details we had never noticed before; we are better able to appreciate it, and to estimate it. In a word, we have had a salutary

experience; and the old man, narrow and egoistic, has been done away with, leaving a clearer field for the new man.

We cannot come too near to these beings simpler than ourselves, nor turn too strong a light on the different courses of the social edifice, even to its very source and foundation. There comes a time in life when it is too late to throw oneself into the enterprises of which we speak. They are escapades suitable for youth, to whom they offer an opportunity of passing a vacation which will be anything but commonplace. Let it not imagine that it is demeaning itself in so doing. It is far otherwise. Man is like the oak; the deeper his roots go, the higher does he lift his head.

5. A Word on the International Rôle of Youth.

The strain between modern principles and realistic civilization has found an expression nowhere more striking than in the state of our international relations. For long years Europe, under the appearance of progress, has been retrograding into barbarism. We have said enough about patriotism to prevent our being suspected of lukewarmness in that respect. It will be so much the more easy to speak frankly on this topic.

The principle of nationality is susceptible of an exaggeration that destroys the beneficial effects of patriotism, and makes of one's country an attack upon humanity. In this way a nation ceases to be a grand

school of fraternity, broadening the heart and ripening one for universal solidarity. It becomes the home of egoism, where are fomented hostility, hatred, envy, all the sentiments that disrupt society and destroy solidarity. This state of affairs is so unhappy that it alone neutralizes all man's real progress toward justice and enfranchisement. Our Europe, sullen and distrustful, furnishes us many plain proofs of this.

Here, also, the modern spirit with its power to be just and reasonable, has a work to do which the present moment invites. A thousand peremptory reasons prevent men of experience, intrusted with the charge of public affairs, from taking part in this work. Tragic necessities and situations beyond the influence of human will tie their hands. Abeyance and reserve are imposed on them by their very position, and by the magnitude of the interests confided to their care.

But youth, studious youth, can do much.

The republic of letters, arts, and sciences no longer exists. We must resuscitate it, and so create a common ground on a loftier plane. If this noble city of the mind were possible in old Europe, when broken into a hundred little states unceasingly at war, why should we despair of rebuilding it to-day? All the better part of our nature urges us to so noble a task. The foundations are laid; we have but to seize on all the elements of solidarity, peace, work, enlightenment, the good-will everywhere about us, to create a marvellous whole.

But one of the essential conditions of success is that

the coming generations should have put in practice this international life in their youth. Their very youth affords a common ground, and an excellent one. Walter Scott has said that a kind of freemasonry exists between young people of every land. There is much truth in the remark.

Our youth can put in practice the fraternization of which we have spoken in the very heart of our own country, without going a step outside. The times are changed, indeed, since France was the second fatherland of all men of culture. But something of this has always lived within her. It is common enough still to find, among one's comrades, those who have come from near and far to study or complete their studies in France. People can say to them, Don't go to France; they come all the same. Our youth has a grand mission to fill toward these strangers. "If I were a student, how I should interest myself in foreign students! I would pay them attentions even to the point of coquetry. I would do the honours of frank French hospitality. If they lived by themselves, as they generally do, I would make excuses to visit them and make them like me. Then I would introduce them to our French students. I would make them joyous, by contact with our light-heartedness. I would talk to them of their country and of my own, of the things which they approve and do not approve in France. I would plead our cause before them, and I should win."¹

¹ Ernest Lavisse : *Études et Étudiants*, p. 287.

We cannot insist too strongly on the importance of such advice.

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But the young Frenchman must take another and a great step. He must make up his mind to study for some time in a foreign land, in order to know and appreciate what is going on outside his own. I acknowledge that, at the outset, this is very hard. Ice must be broken, roads must be laid out and cleared; and a stock of courage and patience laid in. Never mind; it must be done. The Europe of the Renaissance was fairly furrowed in every direction by students, who often travelled afoot and barefoot to save their shoes. A journey which they made in the midst of difficulties and privations we cannot refuse when we can do it by rail. French students should enter all the principal universities of Europe, and their action should be reciprocated.

We expect from these young men an act of reparation and international justice. Every one knows that international calumny, practised on a large scale, has been the scourge of our times. The infernal works of hatred and falsehood have been carried on in time of peace, thanks to public ignorance. We have become unaccustomed to seeing and deciding for ourselves, leaving to the press the work of instruction. The press has instructed us in such fashion that we no longer know whom to trust, and the people are no wiser than ourselves. The country which has been most wronged in this respect, both by its enemies and its own sons, alas! is France. Time is needed to efface the traces of

such foul acts ; but no trouble should be spared to this end. There can be no better times in store for Europe than when the youth of its schools and universities shall have little by little turned public spirit in a new direction. It is, as you see, like creating a new world ; but how powerful are the motives to undertake it with enthusiasm ! Never did nobler task await willing workers.

CHAPTER VII.

BELIEF.

Truth, moral and social, is like an inscription on a mortuary tablet over which all the world walks as it goes about its affairs, and which from day to day becomes more effaced until some friendly chisel deepens the words in the worn stone so that all can see and read. This chisel is in the hands of a few men only, who bend so obstinately over the old inscription that they risk being thrown down upon the marble and trampled under the feet of the careless passers-by. — VINET.

Der religiöse Glaube ist
einfach durch sein
Vorhandensein im Gemüth,
der im Menschengestalt
selbst geführte Thaterweis
des göttlichen Geistes.

LIPSIVS.

BELIEF! Is it not with it that we should have begun? Does not it determine our whole existence? It is at life's opening that we picture it to ourselves most easily, with its eye fixed on its supreme aim. Doubtless this way of looking at it is, to a certain extent, just. Every one of us meets at our entrance into life, under some form or other, an interpretation of things which offers itself as our guide. But this interpretation is the fruit of others' experience, and, indeed,

the result of their life. In saying, then, that we do not begin with faith, but advance toward it, we are on solid ground. It is on this that we wish to stand, as much out of regard for our times as out of regard for the youth whom we are addressing. To build up a belief anew, our age must consider how belief comes into existence ; and this, too, is one of the deepest and most serious needs of youth.

We ordinarily understand by belief, adhesion to a body of doctrine which presents itself authoritatively. God, at a certain epoch, revealed the truth to man once for all. The revelation was made "in the lump," and certain men and certain bodies are its depositaries. As representing divine truth, they claim the same obedience as God. We are not to weigh, examine, or discuss what they offer us, but to receive it on our knees, and accept it in silence with our whole being, whatever be our repugnance or opposition. God has spoken ; that should be enough. All the old dogmatic beliefs hold these views. Their premise, on which everything else depends, is the great question at issue between them and the modern spirit. But we make haste to add that the modern spirit is here in accord with that of Christ and the gospel. Christ did not ask obedience, but conviction ; and he gives to those who listened to him, as a criterion of his words : "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." In saying this he indicates that belief is born of experience, and that to be in the best possible position to get this experience, we must try to be men. To wish to do the will of Our

Father signifies really to examine our life, that we may see of what it consists, and that we may accomplish the will of him whose offspring it is. He who tries to fulfil his destiny as a man, and to be faithful to himself in every respect, builds within him the firmest foundation for the acquisition of human verity and knowledge of doctrines. It has been said that these ideas open the door to individual fantasies, and lack reverence for truth. They infer, on the contrary, the greatest respect for man and for divine truth which can be ever attained. Man's liberty and his nature are both respected. He is not to decide anything through compulsion or over-persuasion ; but step by step, as a child learns to read, his conscience is to learn to spell out the truth. God himself submits himself to man's judgment ; he offers himself ; he does not impose himself, he is willing to be accepted. I know that these are serious things to say, and that in saying them one needs the support of some greater authority than oneself, and I am rejoiced that they have been uttered by the Son of Man. Then, too, if man is respected, God is respected also. To admit his truth we need not close our eyes ; we can open them to their widest. When Christ, feeling himself filled with it, announces it to men, he says to them : Receive it ; it is holy, it is grand. The first comer cannot grasp it, there must be effort and pains. Summon all the strength within you ; appeal to every means of light, to every source of help ; try to be men by intelligent choice, from the heart, by the will ; do not dwarf and mutilate yourselves in any direction, by asceticism or by any vice, — and it will be granted you to hear in

my words not the weak sound of a voice that has risen and died away, but the very echo of eternal realities.

This being said, we can at our ease lay down our fundamental proposition, which is this:—

The whole world of facts, spiritual and material, including history and its traditions, is the field of experience, and experience is the basis of belief.

Belief is the higher region of life; it is the whole of life, the complete synthesis of human induction. All our experiences and those of the past, living anew in our souls, blend themselves together and constitute that personal revelation which life has made us;—that is belief. Note that we reach it by hundreds and by thousands of roads, often very different from one another; but these roads have this in common,—they are routes toward the Infinite. Man, and all Nature with him, is in process of evolution, from the atom and the germ toward perfect life. Their law is that of growth. And when man realizes that this is the underlying principle of his destiny, no phenomenon appears to him isolated. Everything is related, connected, and makes part of a whole. Everything extends beyond and above itself. Every step announces the one that follows. The sense which takes life in its entirety, which considers its origin and its hereafter, which regards it as a starting-point and a means to an end, which includes, in a word, all those details of which our life is made, in accordance with that great will which underlies all things,—this is the religious sense. It is essential to lay stress upon the primordial form which the religious sense assumes when it begins to act,

and before it has as yet attained that lofty conclusion, that last, that sublime flower, which we call belief. This form is called piety, and is in itself an exalted manifestation of reverence. Piety is reverence reaching out to the world beyond. I may compare it to that line on the sea's horizon where the blue of the ocean blends with the blue of the sky. Nowhere is there a closer insight into things human and divine than in piety. It recognizes and reveres in each lesser reality the higher reality. Piety is, with reverence, the most important of human phenomena. Its value to our age, and especially to our youth, cannot be exaggerated. These two sentiments intermingle constantly in man's attitude toward everything. They give the tone to his moral life, and mark its intensity. He who lives badly loses reverence and loses piety. Impiety is a complex crime; it is the summing up of all the evil we have committed in detail. It is possible for man to lose his belief in life; yet no one can reproach him with it if he retain his piety. But if the lack of belief is the result of impiety, we are face to face with a moral suicide.

The strangest thing to be seen in this domain is belief without piety,—belief rigid, supercilious, unsympathetic, devoid of that flavour of humanity without which everything is worthless. A belief which lacks reverence is domineering and unkindly, and even mocks at another's need of belief. We must distrust it; it is but a vain show. The tree is standing, but its roots have been cut through; look at it closer,—it is dead. It would be better to have piety and lack belief..

If I dwell so strongly on reverence and on piety, it is for a purpose. They are the first essentials in reconstructing a living faith. For it is indeed a reconstruction which is in question to-day, not only for those who have broken with the past, but also for those who cannot make revered traditions accord with personal beliefs, as truly worthy of respect as they. Humanity has reached one of those points where, if it would continue to advance, it must renew itself at the sources of life and hope. We shall do this the better, according as we are penetrated with filial piety toward that great religious past whose symbols, customs, and ideas contained so many treasures, and as we approach, on the other hand, with more reverence existing life and its realities. History, then, as well as life, will show us under different forms the same humanity always looking for that which will explain it to itself and quiet its unrest.

There has been accomplished in this century, swayed by so many contentions, a modest work, — a work for the future, if there ever was one, but a work of which most persons are entirely ignorant. It has consisted in going back everywhere to the cradle of religious traditions. By its means we are present at their genesis, and understand them better, perhaps, than their immediate contemporaries. It has been especially active in all that concerns Christ and his work. And the deeper we go into this study, the more evident is it that Christ is unknown not only to the world at large, but even to the churches which bear his name. If there is anything made difficult of access, discoloured, and turned from its original intention, that thing is certainly the

old gospel. It will be to the eternal glory of historic theology, that it has made known to the conscience of our own day this gospel in all its primitive simplicity. In default of this key we were forever shut off from the heart and the thought of a far-distant epoch, whose intellectual formulas and whose customs had become a sealed book. But now the thread of human evolution is made one again. Freed from whatever is local and transient, and from subsequent additions, the great fundamental truths of the gospel appear to us in their real import. In its thought as in its practice, in its way of interpreting the world as in its way of directing human activity, the gospel so far outsteps the churches which are built upon it as to be rather a gospel of the future than of the past. The more one fixes one's attention on the subject, the less can one fail to perceive a great affinity between this forgotten gospel and the loftiest aspirations of the modern spirit. We are so constituted as to understand ourselves; and this for a multitude of reasons. I shall content myself with noting a few of these.

Our epoch has broken with general ideas, especially with those in the domain of metaphysics. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for it to assimilate a religion, even though it were the purest and most elevated, if it presented itself under the form of a metaphysical doctrine. The reticence of Christ as to all that concerns the transcendental world is extreme. He brought religion down from heaven to earth, and changed it from a consideration of cosmic problems to a matter of the human conscience. What strikes

us above all in him is this human character which breathes from his person and from his doctrine. He has shown man the grandeur of his lowly mission,—that narrow road which through long patience and unseen labours leads to the heights of the divine. At the same time he has humanized God. How true is Vinet's remark: "That beautiful utterance of a pagan, 'I am a man, and nothing relating to man lacks interest to me,' the gospel has put in our Lord's mouth." This is true, not only because Christ preached that everlasting pity which suffers from our griefs and that reparation through his sacrifice and forgiveness of the sin which destroys poor humanity, but still further, because he has made it evident that for man the purest revelation of God, and that most easily understood, is man himself. That great psychological truth, that a being can grasp with his intelligence or his feelings only those realities which have their source within him, shines forth at every step in the gospel. It constitutes its humility because it reaches down to those in trouble; but it constitutes also its assurance and strength, since through these very troubles we rise, step by step, to the source of life to hear it said: You are akin to God. Jesus has done more than to declare God, he has made him felt, and made him, in a way, more actual than the world itself. Through his holy life the unknown and hidden God speaks with the tongue of man. God is here, we see him, we feel him, his spirit enters the hearts that love one another and awake to righteousness; there is a halo of God about humanity. It is by this way of believing alone that we can satisfy that

longing for the divine, that thirst for everlasting life, that ardent desire to put our lips to its very spring, to take nothing on the word of another or by proxy, but to see and to touch, to enter ourselves into the holy of holies and adore.

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Another reason which commends the gospel to us is this: We cannot expect in this generation, as in certain great epochs of synthesis, a revelation which will answer all our questions and be the adequate formula of our entire thought. Our conception of the heavens and the earth has entirely changed, and worlds cannot be reconstructed in so short a time. To be content with our daily bread and the cup of cold water which revives and helps us march onward,—this is our lot. Christ helps us wondrously to bear this lot. He came at the time when the gods were dying, when their temples were being rent, when in the mundane majesty of the old religions—the Jewish religion as well as others—the restless soul found, in place of relief, only a burden the more. He restored that ancient human tradition,—reaching back of antiquated customs and decrepit formalism, of sacerdotal pride, and the wiles of Scribes,—of prophets humble before God, brotherly to those in trouble, bold before earthly potentates, and terrors to evil-doers. He said to all those who were seeking and toiling: "The one thing necessary is to believe in God and love your neighbour. He further declared—and this is the very essence of righteousness—that the soul is of more value than the world. He sought out the weak, those who were oppressed and

forgotten, the common people, children, grand labours and deep sufferings, simplicity and sacrifice. Speaking only when necessary, and then in the simplest way, he threw himself wholly into action, and enjoined faithfulness in little things; and in this respect he is peculiarly applicable to our times. Set aside all explanatory commentaries, all the monopolies of his person and his doctrine, stand before that cross of Calvary and you will see him clearly. From the depths of your consciousness, through the holy griefs of the just of all ages, through that sentiment of righteousness so alive in the modern spirit, you will hear something say to you, — truth for man is this, to trust and give of oneself. The salvation of the world comes from those who have practised this law till death.

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Let no one fancy that the simplicity of faith which can be expressed in few words is poverty of faith. All great epochs of belief have been sparing of words: so much the more were they rich in what no words can describe, — in love, in power, in joy. Systems of theology come at a later date, when the spirit of these has taken flight. Then systems increase and multiply, and pile up mighty tomes. In the outset it is otherwise, and I much prefer it then. I may add that then, too, it is most adapted to youth.

There is in this divine folly of the gospel, with its trust, austerity, simplicity, and love, something which captivates on the instant all young hearts. Certain religions are excellent as a shelter for old egoisms, senil-

ities, puerilities, for preserving weak hearts from the sounds of the world, or even for putting sweetly to sleep our conscience and our intellect. The gospel is made, above everything, for life and for the living. It makes us act, it places us in the thick of the fray, it makes us go forward with our ships burned behind us. No looking backward! It is energetic, virile, joyous! It rings out and rouses us like the clarion of battle.

There is yet one point of considerable importance which should fix the attention of all serious thinkers. The gospel is so human that even those who do not know it, or reject parts of it, cannot help being in accord with it when they wish to lead an upright life. It is very difficult to respect man's intelligence, conscience, and rights without coming — I do not say to believe in the Father, in eternal justice, and everlasting life, but to act as if one did believe in them. For he who has reached this point has already raised in his heart and in his activity an altar to the unknown God. Jesus would say to him: Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven. In a recent study on Alexander Vinet, one of our contemporary historians says: "This humanity, this universality of doctrine and spirit of Vinet, assures him a cordial reception, and a serious influence, even among those who do not believe in Christian doctrines, but who do believe in conscience and the existence of those invisible realities which conscience can perceive and reveal."¹ Applied to the gospel itself, such a remark would be more just still.

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¹ Gabriel Monod: *Alexandre Vinet, Revue chrétienne*, mars, 1891.

I wish, in speaking of belief and of its reconstruction, to insist on independence. Respect yourselves, young sirs, you who are seeking and toiling in the domain of ideas. Love your spiritual poverty. Have no fear of beginning with little and of augmenting it slowly and surely. This is the incontestable law of spiritual conquest. Do not listen to speculators who speak to you of riches suddenly acquired. They are the worst tempters. Guard the virginity of the spirit even more than that of the body. Belief is the sister of Liberty; caged, she always dies. Never become slaves that you may serve the better. You will thus lose all that you possess. But in regaining it in this way and in practising spiritual independence, in according to others what you demand for yourselves, remember that man is a social being. This is true in religion as in other things.

Belief, certainly, is personal; but it has this in common with love,—that its bond is more active the less there is demanded of it. It is necessary to have religious fraternization, and to cultivate together our hopes and beliefs,—in short, to worship together. The religious form of the future, besides, will approach that of primitive Christianity; it will be a living temple of brothers united by the same love. Further, we must respect what is best in its hereditary and traditional solidarity, that we may not lose the fruits of history. When one is born among religious surroundings, it is one's duty to be very thankful for it. To love one's church is as good as to love one's family and one's country. But here comes in a

danger,—that of religious party spirit, the spirit of exclusion. Young believer, shun it as you would the pestilence. It would be better to keep to yourself than to cultivate with others the spirit of exclusion and spiritual pride. As in everything else, our times demand in the domain of belief a grand breadth. The duty of the present moment is to fraternize; and individual churches, whatever may be their reason for existence, are useless except as they prepare for the church universal. There are times in history when it is necessary for a man to devote himself to some special and clearly defined cause,—when, in a word, a breach is to be made, and it behooves us to fall into line. Our pressing duty to-day is to overstep the walls of separation, and to grasp hands above their dividing lines. To refind humanity, to become again men,—if this be the watchword in the field of education, of politics, of society, how much more ought we to remember it in the field of religion, the largest of them all, and where narrow-mindedness is parcelling out and cramping everything in such lamentable fashion. May youth understand this! Honour to every sincere attachment which unites us to the religious family from which we sprung! For the time has come again when Moriah and despised Gerizim are of equal worth, and when it behooves those who inhabit them to seize the pilgrim staff and mount to less limited horizons. There they will hear things which will make them exclaim with the old pilgrims at the first Pentecost: "Behold we come out of every nation under heaven, and we hear every man in our own tongue wherein we were

born," — and overcome with joy at discovering brothers when they believed themselves wide apart, they will experience feelings which this intolerant and quarrelsome world does not know. Through humanity pure and simple, they will find that contact with eternal realities which lifts man from the dust; and the same prayer will rise from all hearts: Our Father who art in heaven.

This brings us to our culminating point. Through fraternity we come to know the Father. Through faithfulness we come from things transitory to the perception of things eternal. This is the end of life. Here meet all the roads we have travelled; here the ideal finds its crown; here is supreme unity. It is for this that the flowers are fair, that the stars shine, that the hidden enigma of love is born anew every spring. It is for this that man suffers, works, and weeps. Happy is he if to him it is given to draw from all existence, like a pure fragrance, that filial *credo* which is to the instinctive love of life what a clouded impression is to a clearly defined sentiment; which is to the first smile of a child what the declaration of a young man is, when in an outburst of tenderness he cries: My mother!

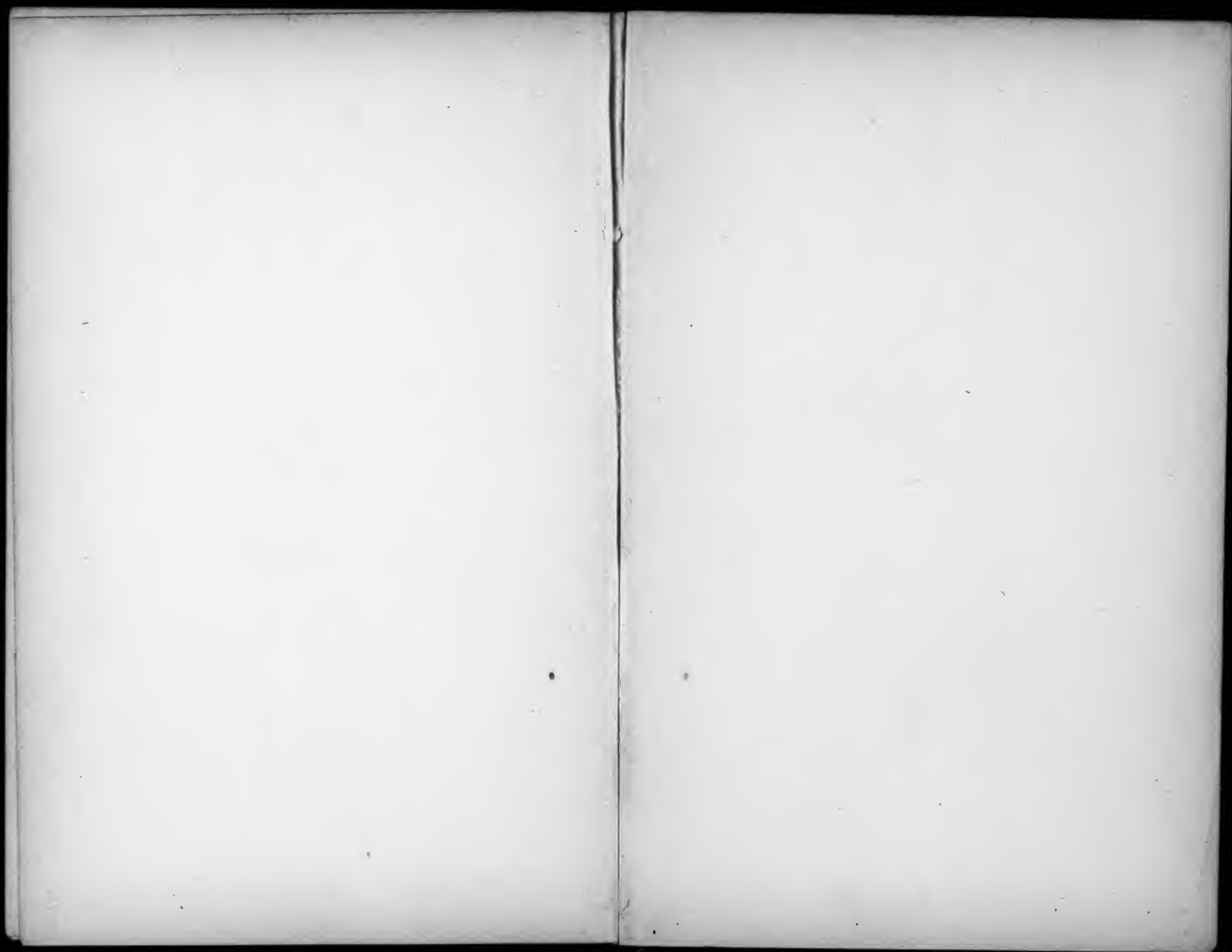
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This is the road in which we ask you to march, ye chosen flower of our youth. From the midst of your labours, your griefs, the struggles of your intelligence with darkness and of your will with evil, lift your heart to the verities, so old and so new, so familiar and so forgotten. Let the wind of the Holy Spirit blow upon

your heads. Know its mystery, its terror, and its tenderness, and you will be able on your way, which is that too of humanity, to see arise the dawn you wait for. Thus you will have overcome the evil you received with the heritage of your ancestors. You will multiply a hundred-fold the good they have done. In attacking, in this spirit, their vast labours in science, the marvellous conquests they left behind them, what a work you will be able to accomplish! May you thus become, in this age of subdivision, weariness, and wear and tear, that force of which our Michelet somewhere speaks, when he says that some day it will sweep away the old world with a breath from God!

THE END.





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